LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 31
OCTOBER 2019
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EZRA FURMAN

"I GOT THE URGE FOR ROCK 'N' ROLL"

METRONOMY

"I WANTED THE NEW ALBUM TO BE THIS VERY INSTANT, POPPY THING"

HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER

DECCA AT 90

R.E.M.

56 NEW REVIEWS!

PIXIES, BON IVER, RODRIGUEZ, WILCO, BLUR, MILES DAVIS, LIAM GALLAGHER + TURNTABLES

ABBEY ROAD

"IT WAS LIKE THEY WERE MAKING FOUR SOLO ALBUMS"
INSIDE THE STUDIO FOR THE BEATLES' LAST STAND
+ NEW 50TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION REVIEWED

THE MAGAZINE FOR VINYL LOVERS
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OCTOBER 2019
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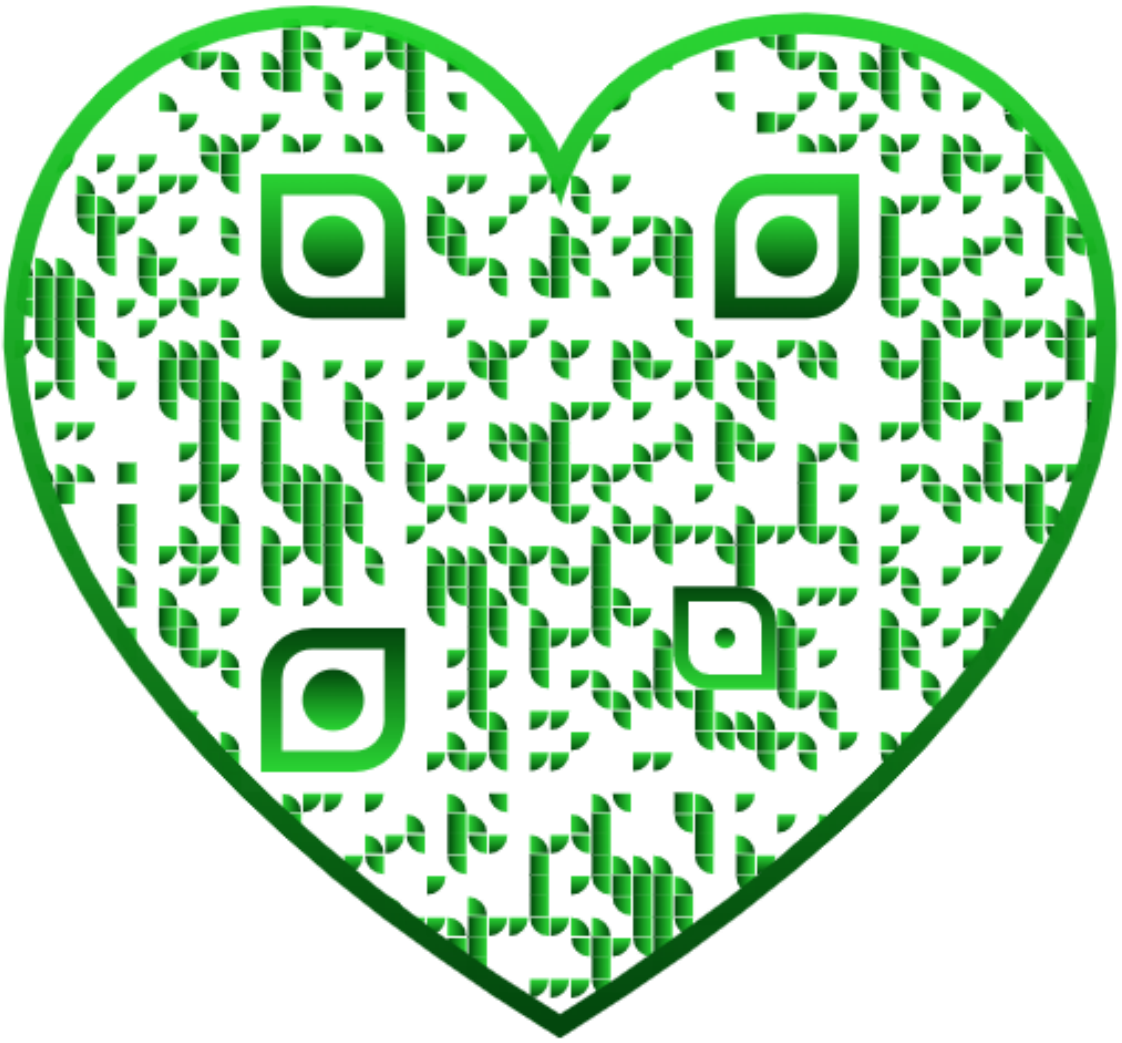

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KLANGTIPP

STEREO-TEST
KLANG-NIVEAU 94%
PREIS/LEISTUNG
★★★★☆
EXZELLENT

Hi-Fi Choice
EDITOR'S CHOICE

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&records
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sempre audio
Empfehlung der Redaktion

Paul Rigby
(The Audiophile Man)
GROOVY
8/10

HI-FI WORLD

An AUDIOPHILIA STAR Component

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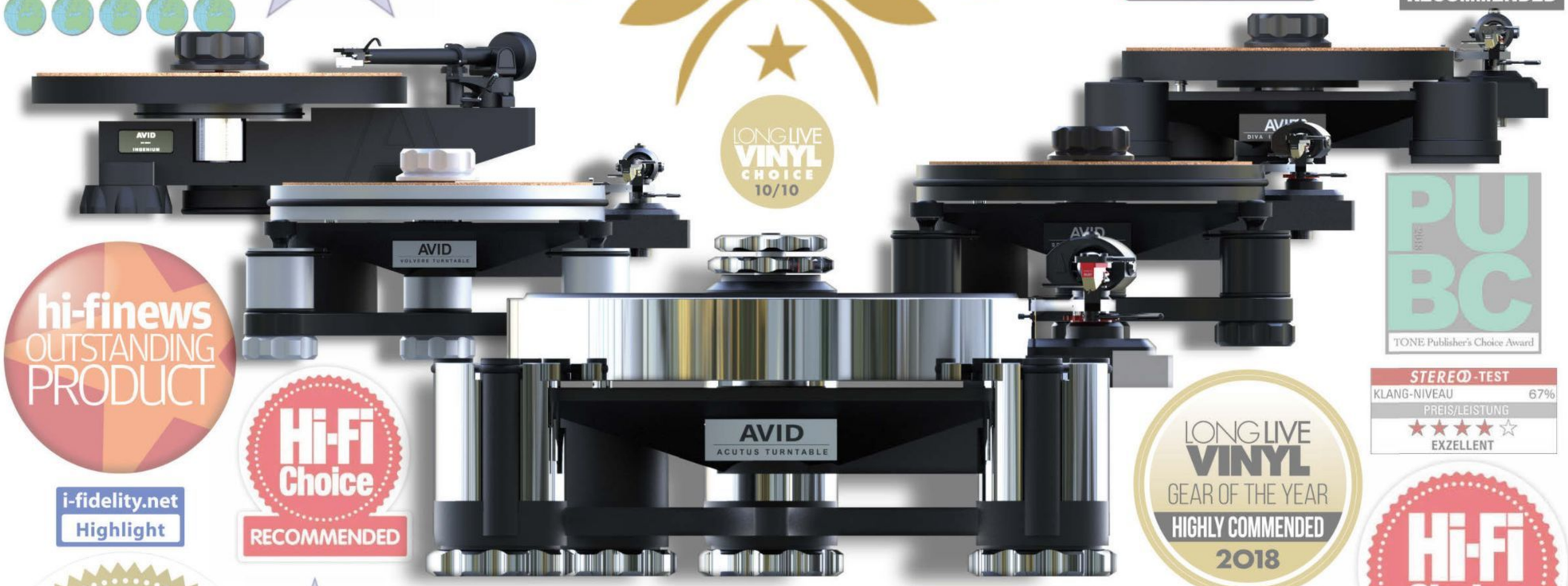

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Welcome...

Even if you don't listen to anything else this month, close the curtains, switch off your phone, put the cat out, disable your home assistant of choice… and indulge yourself in 2 minutes, 41 seconds of sonic perfection. Track 39 of the new *Abbey Road* 50th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition, the majestic isolated strings and brass track from *Something,* is as good as it gets. George Harrison's stirring contribution to The Beatles' final masterpiece was John Lennon's favourite song on the album; for what it's worth, it's probably my favourite Beatles song of all. Of course, you already own *Abbey Road*, you know it inside out from *Come Together* to *Her Majesty* and even dutifully refrain from skipping track 3; so, well you might wonder why the most polished of all Beatles records needed revisiting at all; but it's moments such as these that lay bare the extreme musicality and vision that still coursed through the band and George Martin as The End approached. Facing up to the challenge of "how do you make it more hi-fi?" Giles Martin's remaster and its new bonus tracks also betray rare moments of humour puncturing the heavy atmosphere as The Fab Four prepared for the "divorce" John Lennon would request months later. George shouts, "Kick Out The Jams" after yet another patience-testing run through *Maxwell's Silver Hammer*; a take of *I Want You (She's So Heavy)* is interrupted by Glyn Johns reporting a complaint from a neighbour (imagine telling The Beatles to keep the noise down); and a typically acerbic Lennon quips about *Sun King*: "Now this won't keep the Apple staff in work for the next 10 years". How wrong he was. Huw Baines' cover story digs deep into both the original record and Martin's remaster, as Alan Parsons and John Kurlander reveal exactly what went down in Studios 1, 2 and 3 in St John's Wood. You'll also find an in-depth review of the Deluxe Edition and John Pickford's expert guide to collecting *Abbey Road* rarities and curiosities.

You might wonder why the most polished of all Beatles records needed revisiting

It's not all about the greatest band ever to pick up instruments this month, though. Our packed interviews section features chats with Ezra Furman, Metronomy, Hiss Golden Messenger and Fionn Regan about their new albums, we round up 40 Essential Southern Soul records you need to own, tell the story of the legendary Decca label on its 90th birthday and take an in-depth look at R.E.M.'s ninth album, *Monster*.

Finally, we were devastated to hear news of the death by suicide of songwriter and poet David Berman while we were putting this issue together. The Silver Jews founder had just released what will certainly be one of our albums of the year as Purple Mountains in July. Our thoughts and respects are with David's family and friends.

Thanks for reading.

Gary Walker *Editor*

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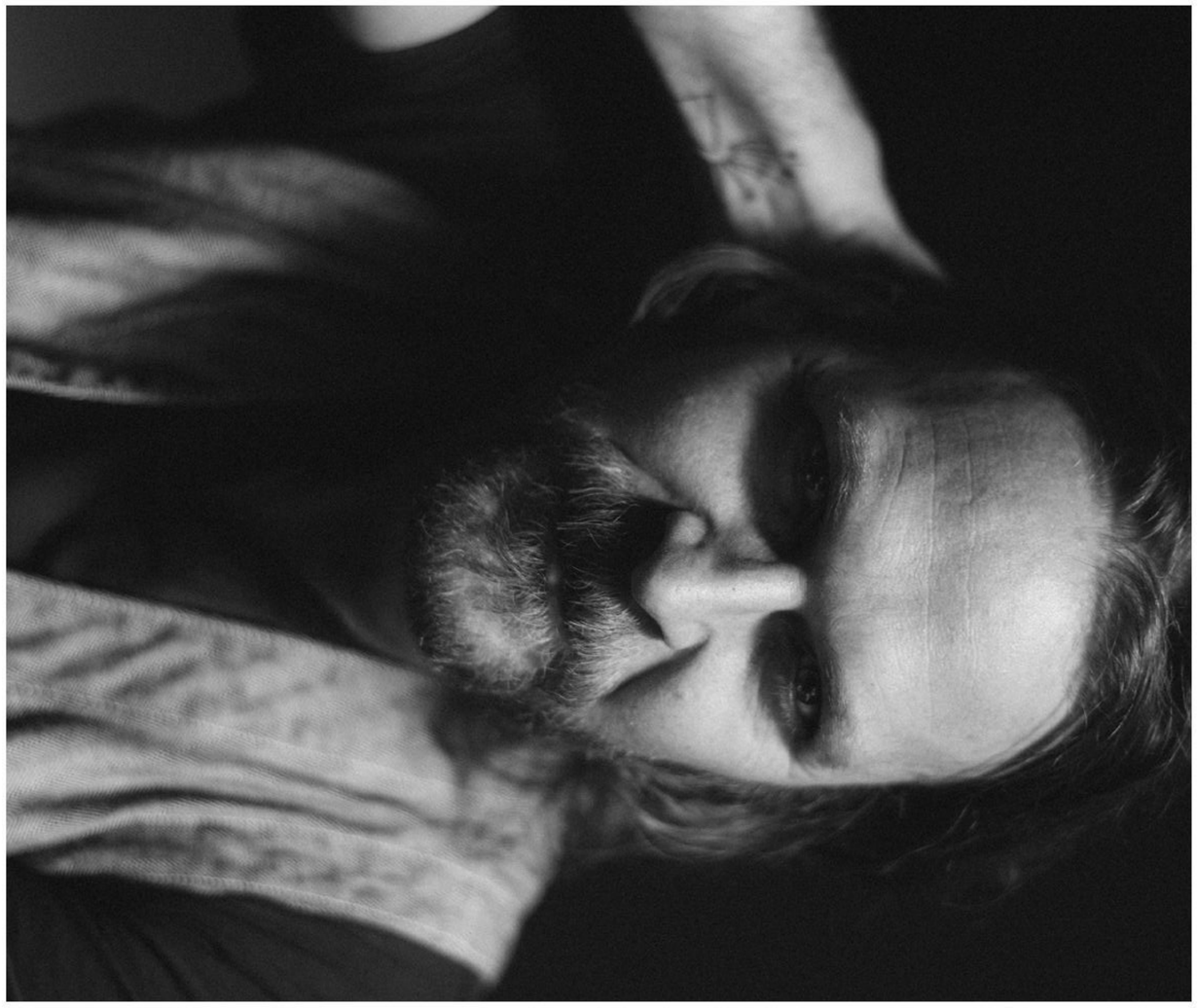

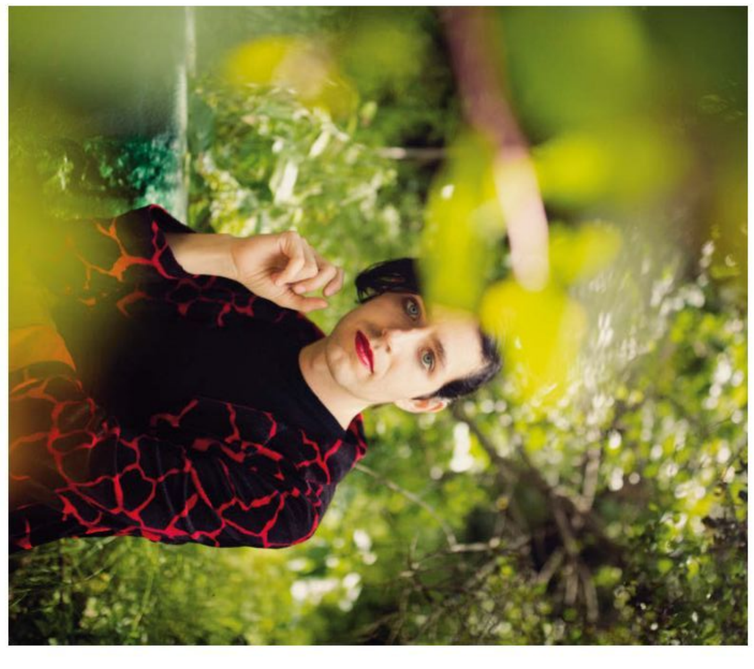

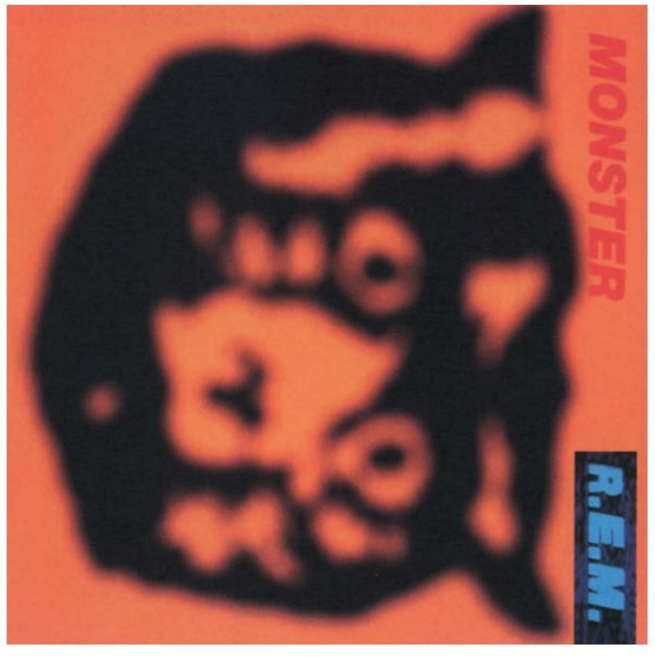

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Key studio figures reveal how The Beatles made their majestic last stand in 1969

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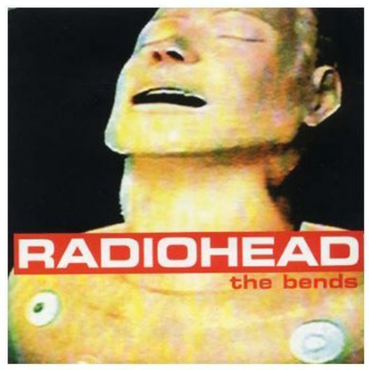
LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team's favourite albums recorded at Abbey Road

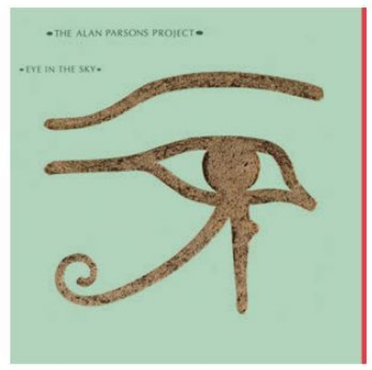
GARY WALKER
Revolver
The Beatles

GARY TIPP
The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn Pink Floyd

STEVE HARNELL
Abbey Road
The Beatles



ANDY McGREGOR
The Bends
Radiohead



IAN PEEL
Eye In The Sky
The Alan Parsons Project

Meet our expert contributors…

SIMON RAYMONDE
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

JOHN EARLS
In addition to writing about music for *Classic Pop*, *NME* and *The Daily Star*, John Earls was editor of Teletext's Planet Sound for a decade. He also writes about football, spends too much time on Twitter and is delighted that his new hometown in Bedfordshire has a decent record shop. There's even a bus that goes to Luton Town's ground, so his life is essentially sorted.

HUW BAINES
Huw grew up a snotty punk kid, cribbing The Clash LPs from his dad's stash and haunting the racks at the venerable Spillers Records in Cardiff. He's written about music for a wealth of publications, including *Noisey*, *DIY* and *Guitar Magazine*, among others, and about sport for ESPN, while cultivating a vinyl collection that's challenging the structural integrity of his house.

JONATHAN WRIGHT
Jonathan began writing about music in the late 80s. He's interviewed such singular talents as Shaun Ryder, Edwyn Collins and Richey Edwards. He's written for *The Guardian*, *Classic Pop* and many others. Jonathan edited *Adventure Rocketship! Let's All Go To The Science Fiction Disco*, a book of essays about the interface between geek culture and music.

PETE PAPHIDES
Pete bought his first record at the age of nine and has been a vinyl obsessive ever since, while writing for *Melody Maker*, *Q*, *Mojo*, *Time Out*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. He is one of the UK's best known music journalists and has also written and presented documentaries for BBC Radio 4 and BBC 6 Music. You can catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm.

Anthem Publishing
Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath BA1 6PL
Tel **+44 (0) 1225 489 984**

Editor **Gary Walker**
gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

Creative Director **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem-publishing.com

Art Editor **Andrew McGregor**
andy.mcgregor@anthem-publishing.com

Founder & Editor At Large **Ian Peel**
ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com

Production Editor **Gary Tipp**

Digital Assistant **Tilda Howard**

Contributors
Huw Baines, Glen Bushell, Garth Cartwright, John Earls, Steve Harnell, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Gareth Murphy, Pete Paphides, Chris Parkin, John Pickford, Simon Raymonde, Paul Rigby, Felix Rowe, Teri Saccone, Will Simpson, Gary Tipp, Wyndham Wallace, Ben Wardle, Daniel Dylan Wray, Jonathan Wright

ADVERTISING
Advertising **Chris Cope, Sean Leslie**
chris.cope@anthem-publishing.com
sean.leslie@anthem-publishing.com

ANTHEM PUBLISHING
Managing Director **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com
CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com
Head Of Marketing & Production
Verity Travers
verity.travers@anthem-publishing.com

LICENSING
Regina Erak *regina.erak@globalworks.co.uk*

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Print **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**
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Up to 250 collectible vinyl albums by artists ranging from Eric Clapton, Genesis and Coldplay to Kylie, Arctic Monkeys, Lianne La Havas and Clean Bandit set to go under the hammer on Saturday 5th October

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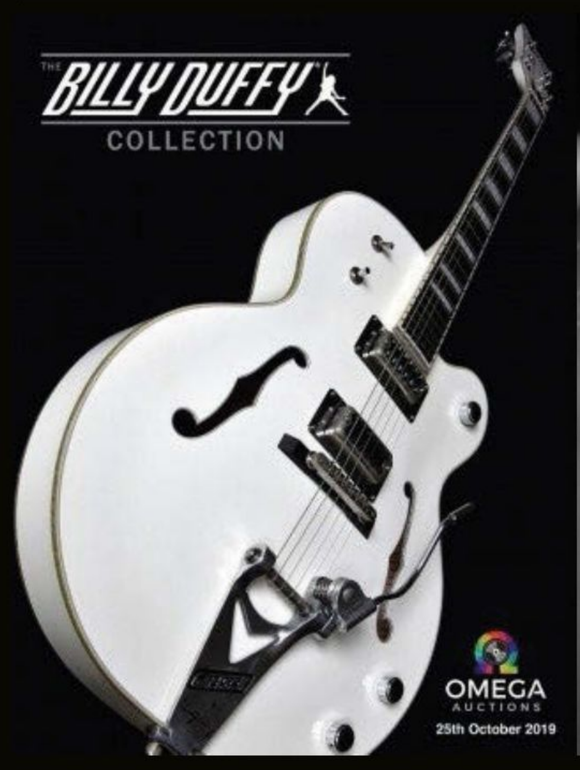

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Omega Auctions are excited to announce that we have now opened a 2nd office to cover Southern England. In addition to our 16,000 sq ft Head Office and Saleroom in Newton-le-Willows, appraisals can now also be booked at our new Uxbridge office.

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On the record

The Speed Of Sound

Meet the go-slow Abbey Road engineer who has cracked the art of half speed mastering

Miles Showell likes to do things at his own pace and has been doing so for over 15 years at Abbey Road Studios, where he is the go-to engineer for half-speed mastering. Having worked on reissue projects for Brian Eno, The Rolling Stones, Marvin Gaye, Dusty Springfield and Creedence Clearwater Revival, among many others, here he explains the process (at his own speed, naturally).

What is half speed mastering and how is it done?
"HSM is a vinyl disc cutting process whereby I run both the source and the master disc cutting lathe at half their normal speed. This gives the cutterhead twice as long to cut the intricate groove and causes it to draw much less current than a real-time cut. The result is better sounding records. I have a specially customised lathe at Abbey Road that has been tuned to my specification and sounds wonderful."

What are the benefits?
"The biggest is improved sound quality. Half-speed mastered vinyl records have far more accurate and cleaner-sounding high frequency response and a superior stereo image."

Can it be a stressful process?
"Not stressful, but dreadful to have to listen to while the cuts are being done. I have had 14-hour non-stop half-speed days. But it is always worth it when the finished albums come back from the plant. The sound can be phenomenal."

Do you need the original analogue tape?
"No, but you do need the best possible source. Some classic album master tapes are now so worn as to be beyond usability. Often a 1:1 safety copy that has had less use will sound better than the now worn and damaged masters. I have also had excellent results remastering albums from the 1990s and 2000s, which were mixed to DAT (The Scissor Scissors & Underworld being two examples). The crucial thing is to make a clean transfer and avoid digital peak limiting, which is used to make digital media sound loud. This is totally unnecessary for vinyl records and is the death of good fidelity."

Do certain artists or genres lend themselves to HSM over others?
"Not at all, I have half-speed mastered rock, pop, dance, Classical, folk and jazz albums. Provided the recording is good, there is a benefit to be had by HSM. I take fidelity very seriously and have declined potential sessions where the source was not good enough to warrant a half-speed cut."

Discogs TRENDING CHART

THE TOP 10 TRENDING VINYL RELEASES FROM THE DISCOGS COMMUNITY THIS MONTH

10 *Mercedes Marxist* IDLES
9 *The Center Won't Hold* Sleater-Kinney
8 *Introducing Kenny Burrell* Kenny Burrell
7 *Σ(No,12k,Lg,17Mif)* New Order + Liam Gillick
6 *Purple Mountains* Purple Mountains
5 *Uno Dos Tres 1-2-3* Willie Bobo
4 *Apollo: Atmospheres* Brian Eno
3 *Tical* Method Man
2 *Bandana* Freddie Gibbs, Madlib
1 *Anima* Thom Yorke

Official Vinyl Albums Chart AUGUST 2019

10 *Rumours* Fleetwood Mac
9 *Duck* Kaiser Chiefs
8 *Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent* Lewis Capaldi
7 *Stranger Things Season 3* Various Artists
6 *Originals* Prince
5 *Unknown Pleasures* Joy Division
4 *When We All Fall Asleep Where Do We Go* Billie Eilish
3 *Tiny Changes* Various Artists
2 *No. 6 Collaborations Project* Ed Sheeran
1 *Anima* Thom Yorke

JAN KLOS

The Selecter

Long Live Vinyl's essential picks for the month ahead

SONG EXPLODER

Free

songexploder.net

If you haven't yet heard Thao Nguyen's excellent podcast, which started in 2014, you need to. *Song Exploder* takes an in-depth look at the making of a single track each time, often with input from the people behind the music themselves. We really enjoyed the episodes on R.E.M.'s *Try Not To Breathe* and *Sugar For The Pill* by Slowdive.

MUTE 4.0 T-SHIRT

£20

mutebank.co.uk

Daniel Miller's ever-eclectic label continues to celebrate its 40th 'Anti-versary' with events including a Rough Trade East takeover on 13 October and a series of limited-edition reissues on coloured vinyl. Make sure you're kitted out appopriately for the occasion with this T-shirt printed on premium Stanley Stella Black cotton.

TEAC TN-4D TURNTABLE

£599

teac-audio.eu

TEAC's new direct drive turntable is a handsome beast with its sleak low profile. That's due to the company's new brushless DC servo motor. It comes with a Sumiko Oyster MM cartridge, built-in phono stage and S-shaped tonearm.

FEAR & LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS (OST)

£25.99

musiconvinyl.com

This is bat country! Music On Vinyl are reissuing the soundtrack to the 1998 film of Hunter S Thompson's gonzo journalism classic. Limited to 2,500 copies with a laser-etched D-side and fold-out poster, it includes songs by Bob Dylan, Jefferson Airplane, Tom Jones and Big Brother & The Holding Company.

INDIE DAZE FESTIVAL

£44

mute-elephant-music.co.uk

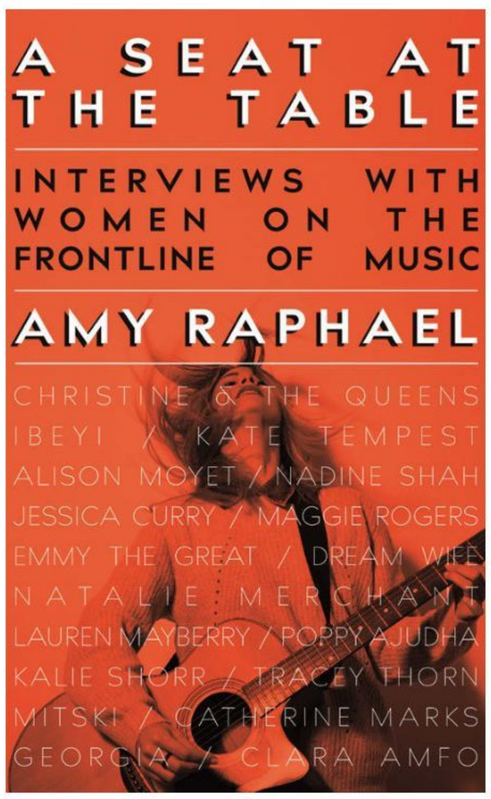
Scratch your early-90s itch with a ticket for the sixth Indie Daze Festival at The Forum, Kentish Town on 5 October. This year's event is preceded by a four-day residency at The Hundred Club featuring The Primitives, Thousand Yard Stare and Miles Hunt.

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

£14.99

virago.co.uk

Featuring female artists including Kate Tempest, Tracey Thorn and Chvrches' Lauren Mayberry, Amy Raphael's follow-up to 1995's excellent *Never Mind The Bollocks: Women Rewrite Rock* is a collection of interviews probing how much has really changed and how much still needs to – in the music industry in the 24 years since.



Work In Progress

MOON DUO

STARS ARE THE LIGHT **SACRED BONES** 27 SEPTEMBER

Our new album is... Called *Stars Are The Light* and is our fifth studio album for Sacred Bones. Our last album, *Occult Architecture*, came out in 2017 in two volumes. Since then, we've been busy with touring and our other bands, Sanae with Vive La Void, and myself with Wooden Shjips. I also produced the debut album by Rose City Band for our Jean Sandwich Records label. Sanae scored a play about the whistle blower Reality Winner.

The sessions were... Similar to previous ones, in that we recorded partially in a studio and partially at home. We wanted to start with an emphasis on live tracking the drums along with a drum machine, to get a sort of humanoid groove. We did the initial tracking with our drummer, John Jeffrey, at Jackpot! here in Portland, then worked on a lot of the additional recording at home.

We worked with... Larry Crane at Jackpot! on the basic tracks. Jackpot! is a Portland institution and Larry publishes the amazing *Tape-Op* magazine. We also worked more closely with John Jeffrey on the beats, thinking a lot about how to meld the acoustic drums with the electronic, so it's sort of like two drummers, one human and one a machine, playing at the same time.

We used... To be really controlling when it came to mixing. For this album, we wanted to let go of that control a bit. We mixed it with Sonic Boom (Spacemen 3, Spectrum) in Portugal, and gave him a lot of latitude. We sent him the tracks ahead of time so he could establish a vibe, then we stayed with him and worked on the fine details. He has an amazing ear and knowledge of music. If you listen to the album with headphones, you'll hear the level of detail he put into the mix, and especially that he and Sanae put into the synth textures.

We were inspired... By the 70s disco scene, especially in New York. The idea of a musical safe space for all people, however they identified, was really inspiring. It's a really beautiful idea. So there's a lot of optimism that went into the music, a lot of light, hence the title. We're hoping that comes through to the listener.

We learnt... Once again, that making an album is hard! Mostly on an emotional level, but also all of the logistic stuff. You start with a pure idea, then try to protect it as the process grinds you down. That sounds depressing, but it's a lovely journey in the end. And maybe a good metaphor for life. If it's not a bit of a struggle, maybe it's not worth it.

Playing these songs live... Should be really fun. We're going to exploit the dual-drummer approach. It will open up a lot of groove options and also restrict us in some ways that will be fun to tackle creatively.

You'd be surprised to know that...
We still conceive of each album with vinyl in mind. Growing up listening to vinyl has set in my mind how an album should be sequenced and how it should flow. I think a lot about Side 2, as that's often the most interesting side of classic albums, where the weirder songs end up, with the singles up front. We also think about how the first side should end, and what the last song should communicate, like it's the last scene of a movie.

Lost Shops

#4 MOLE JAZZ

Mole Jazz was the last of the great British jazz record shops, a magical place that stocked new and used jazz from across Europe and the USA. Mole was co-founded by Graham Griffiths and Ed Dipple. They wanted a shop devoted to jazz with a specific remit to sell and promote contemporary releases; Mole served this purpose well.

"Mole started as a jazz mail order list in 1976," says Griffiths. "The building on Grays Inn Road proved ideal, as we were right by Kings Cross Station, near Euston and a host of tube lines and bus routes. We opened in June 1978 and, from day one, we were successful."

Both partners worked their international contacts: they sought out deletions and cut-outs in the US, Japanese reissues of rare Blue Note albums and obscure European jazz releases from across the Continent. New to London, I used to dig in Mole and was stunned by the stock. The shop's record label scored with reissues of Tubby Hayes and Art Pepper's stunning *Blues For The Fisherman*. As the 1980s got underway, Mole opened a sister shop on New Row in Covent Garden (closed in 1997).

In 2004, Griffiths closed Mole's Kings Cross shop, transferring the remaining stock to a space above Harold Moore's classical record shop in Soho.

Garth Cartwright

JASMINE PASQUILL CRISPIN SEMMENS

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

Our revered columnist is not solely about impeccably curated indie music. As a member of a Tottenham-supporting shoegazing supergroup Simon played his part in releasing a triumphal, David Seaman-baiting flexidisc

"Lush, Moose and Cocteau Twins form supergroup The Lillies" was one of the unlikeliest of headlines found in the news section of the *NME* in the early 90s. In September 1991, The Lillies released a single, *And David Seaman Will Be Very Disappointed About That*. It had just the one track on it, and was only available as a flexidisc included in a football fanzine called *The Spur*.

North London's finest football team, Tottenham Hotspur, had won the FA Cup earlier that year, yet it was the semi-final victory over arch rivals Arsenal, highlighted by an unbelievable 35-yard free-kick from Paul Gascoigne which prompted BBC commentator Barry Davies to utter those immortal words, which Arsenal goalkeeper David Seaman and all Spurs fans will never forget. And which subsequently encouraged a motley crue of shoegazers to record a track to commemorate the moment that ball flew into the top corner of the net.

Miki Berenyi and Chris Acland from Lush, and Russell Yates and Kevin 'Moose' McKillop from Moose were friends and fellow Spurs fans. We often went to matches together and all lived near each other. 1991 was a good few years before Britpop became a 'thing' and football was still not yet deemed in any way cool. I am sure our minor dalliance as The Lillies could hardly be seen as the signifying catalyst for pop and football to emerge fully-knit into youth culture, resulting in bands appearing on the front of the *NME*, *Smash Hits* and the like dressed in their team's colours!

But who knows? Maybe history will observe it differently. Maybe 4AD, Cocteau Twins, Lush, Moose and the 'shoegaze' movement so revered by media and public alike for its design aesthetic and artistic curation, were the real pioneers here.

I'm joking. While it is clearly no *World In Motion*, our 'song' (it's barely even a song; Miki singing "3-1" over and over was as close to a 'chorus' as we got) came together in an evening at our studio that summer. I had recorded *Match Of The Day* from the semi-final on my VHS recorder and took the tape into the studio, lifted the sample of Barry Davies' commentary and started playing around with a drum machine. Then Miki, Chris, Moose and Russell all came over to the studio and we got drunk, plugged in guitars and the next day we had our 'song' ready to go.

Stuart Mutler, editor of *The Spur*, and a big fan of indie music, had suggested it as a way of celebrating our Cup final win over Forest, and the famous victory over Arsenal of course, but also I'm sure, as a way to get some more attention for the fanzine.

In the mid 80s, I'd been a regular subscriber to *When Saturday Comes*, one of the first fanzines to write intelligently about football from a fan's perspective. Taking its cue from the 70s punk fanzines that influenced it, *WSC* in turn spawned an outbreak of supporter fanzines throughout the late 80s and early 90s. Stuart created *The Spur* at a time when our supporters needed a place to vent. The club had been in dire financial trouble and millionaire businessman Alan Sugar and football manager and entrepreneur Terry Venables bought the club together, but Sugar was vastly unpopular as an owner (in the same way Mike Ashley currently is at Newcastle) and so began a period of prolonged unrest and protest among the club's supporters.

It was certainly the most unlikely supergroup football song ever

The Spur aired and reflected our feelings, with humour and great love for the club at its core. I don't know if the flexidisc helped sell any copies of *The Spur*, I hope so, but it was great to be part of. Indeed, Russell Yates said this at the time: "We've all been Spurs fans for years, and for myself making this flexi has probably made me more proud than making any Moose record."

It was certainly the most unlikely indie-supergroup football song ever. A rather lovely addendum to this story is that 28 years later, I am still working with all members of The Lillies, with the exception of beloved friend Chris Acland who tragically passed away in October 1996.

Miki and Kevin 'Moose' McKillop formed Piroshka, who signed to Bella Union this year. And Russell Yates, singer of Moose (together with former Moose drummer Mig Morland) looks after all the radio and TV for Bella Union and has done since we began in 1997. If that ain't enough synergy for you, I also played bass with Piroshka in July this year for two festival shows, and finally Moose's other drummer Richie Thomas (formerly of Dif Juz) is my partner in Lost Horizons. My next project is to try to release all the out-of-print Moose albums on vinyl. And so it seems that at the centre of my musical universe, Moose are always there.

The Big Question

Addressing Vinyl's Most Pressing Issues

Does vinyl need to go green?

With the issue of plastics and energy usage on the environmental agenda, could this spell trouble for the future of vinyl records?

During a recent discussion on the challenges facing the vinyl industry Nathon Raine, a director at Leeds-based online retailer Norman Records, was clear on the vinyl elephant in the room. "As a plastic/oil product, it is on the wrong side of environmental history. PVC is not nice stuff and the EU has it in its sights."

While it's the interaction with the physical artefact that resonates deeply with the record buyer, the trouble, potentially, for record collectors and the environment is that the product has to be created from raw materials and the process requires energy.

True, most vinyl records involve the use of fossil fuels and chemicals, but to their eternal credit they typically endure for decades, with vinyl LPs being cherished and bequeathed and resold. What's more, they rarely end up in landfill (more likely on Discogs or in the local charity shop).

Streaming services might seem like the more environmentally-friendly option, yet millions of digital files being streamed billions of times requires energy-hungry servers to store, retrieve and serve them to the consumer's host device. "Everyone forgets streaming's not being carbon neutral and a huge energy consumer," notes Adam Teskey, the manufacturing director at The Vinyl Factory (the UK's biggest pressing plant). "The whole idea of the 'cloud' is a misnomer. Saving computer data is becoming one of the biggest users of energy going and people are choosing to ignore it."

By contrast, once a vinyl LP has been produced and purchased, its impact on the environment becomes minimal, even the record player typically requires less energy than a computer or digital music server.

An issue is the production of new records, as the actual fundamentals of record pressing haven't changed in decades. If you want to open a new plant or expand your capacity, you'll need to hunt down an old press. And if you get your hands on one, you'll be faced with the familiar environmental issues.

The pressing plant process has evolved slowly over the years

Ton Vermeulen, the owner of Record Industry, a huge pressing plant in the Netherlands, believes the improvement of the existing methods is the route to an environmentally-friendlier process. "We still press records from PVC, however the ingredients have changed over the years. The European REACH Organisation has banned some metal stabilisers from the PVC used. We are always trying to improve our processes to use less energy. Our boilers are equipped with the latest burners to reduce CO_2 emissions, on the roof we have installed solar cell panels on which presses can run."

Adam is in total agreement. "Of our most recent initiatives, I'm most proud of the fact that we now 100% recycle all of our PVC waste. Black waste goes back into our own process, and we sell our colour waste PVC to a company in Germany. Similarly, in 2011 our energy costs made up over 10% of our annual turnover, whereas our target figure for this year is down to 3%."

Radical solutions are also on the horizon. Canadian based Viryl Technologies, for instance, are investing in a new production process technology to decrease the waste in record manufacture. Pressing plants such as Deepgrooves in the Netherlands are also developing a new eco-friendly press process.

Whatever the speed of change, it's only right that the vinyl industry continues to adapt to the needs of the wider world around it.

The Completist

PETE PAPHIDES

A near-miss with the two Go-Betweens singles at the top of his vinyl wish list teaches our columnist that grief has no perspective...

Over the last 30 years, lots of records have passed through my wants list, but throughout that time, the same two records have sat at the top, as intransigent as the butternut squash in your vegetable basket. And whenever I'm in a record shop and I see lots of Go-Betweens singles, my pulse accelerates. Because maybe, just maybe, this will be the day.

So here I am, in David's record shop, just down the road from my house. There appears to be a fresh intake of Go-Betweens items: the haunting *Cattle And Cane*; the scratchy dispatches of their Postcard single *I Need Two Heads*; *Part Company* – the greatest break-up song released in the year that also gave us *Careless Whisper*. The sight of these triggers the memory of a conversation a few weeks ago when David mentioned a collection he'd just bought, including "loads of stuff by that Australian band you like."

But the two singles at the top of my wish list predate all the aforementioned titles. They were both released on Brisbane's indie Able Label imprint: *Lee Remick* was The Go-Betweens' audacious debut, its artwork featuring a mini-festo in which founding frontman Robert Forster paid tribute to his favourite pop song ever. It reads: "*Last Train to Clarksville* has been written, and we are left with our own imperfection."

But then, months later, Forster proved himself wrong with *People Say* – a single that is to my world as that Monkees song was to the young Forster. "The clouds lie on their backs," he sang in the middle-eight of *People Say*, "And rain on everyone/ But you always stay dry/ You've got your own private sun." He wrote that about the group's Lindy Morrison. The first time I heard it, in 1986, I knew how he felt. I had a crush on her too.

I gaze up at David and ask, "Do you know if those first two singles were in that collection?" The colour runs from his face. "Oh God. You asked me to reserve them if they came in, didn't you?"

"Um, yes."

"Pete. I'm sorry."

"What did you sell them for?"

"£700 for the pair"

"£700 for both is very... reasonable."

"Pete, I'm so sorry."

Back home, my wife can see something's up. I tell her what happened and how she mustn't feel bad for me because none of it means anything, really. I mean, if I hadn't got so geographically close to those records, I wouldn't have given it another thought. It was merely the fact that, to quote another one of my 80s indie heroes, I "had it in the palm of my hand" (*Palm Of My Hand*, The Pale Fountains, 1982).

The next morning, we drive to the airport to pick up our daughter from a school trip. We're excited. It's been two weeks. "You're still thinking about those records, aren't you?"

"Look," I explain. "Just ignore me. I think that what I'm feeling is grief. And no-one should ever feel grief about a record. Not even when it's *People Say* by The Go-Betweens. It's distasteful."

"The heart wants what the heart wants," says my wife. I can't tell if she's empathising or taking the piss. I think she might be doing both.

"Is it as bad as Bowie dying?"

"No. It's not as bad as Bowie dying, but probably neck-and-neck with Prince." I know how terrible this sounds. Even Robert Forster,

"No. It's not as bad as Bowie dying, but probably neck-and-neck with Prince"

Pete Paphides is a music journalist, record collector and broadcaster. Catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm

who wore a red stretch top like the one in the *Kiss* video when The Go-Betweens did *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, would tell me to take a good long look at myself at this point.

"Really? As bad as Prince?"

"Grief has no perspective," I reply.

After we return from the airport, I check my emails. David has forwarded my details to the collector who beat me to those Go-Betweens singles. Perhaps he's had second thoughts. Sure enough, I go to Facebook and there he is. Brazenly waving his acquisitions in my face. Taunting me.

Except that, actually, he's called Dom. And he's lovely. "Sorry! Wanted them for donkey's years," he writes, "I'm afraid they're going nowhere!" Not only is he lovely, but we have a lot in common. He runs an indie label called Polytechnic Youth. I've even got some of his records. At the end of our exchange, he invites me to his house so I can at least have a look at the records. "Or would that make it worse?" he adds. "It would," I say, "But can I take you up on the offer anyway?"

The following day, I've made a new friend. As I leave Dom's house, I thank him for the umpteenth time. "You've been very kind," I say. When my wife asks me how it went, I tell her that I can finally let this go. "I feel like one of those Christians you see on the news who go to prison in order to tell a loved one's killer that they have found it in their heart to forgive them."

"That's very noble of you," she says, "You're like a cross between Nick Hornby and Jesus." This time I probably don't need to ask if she's taking the piss.

The Vinyl Factory

New boxsets feature unheard material from the Manc label

Factory Records' 40th birthday celebrations continue into a second year with the release by Rhino Records of two limited edition boxsets and an exhibition telling the story of the famous Manchester label.

Use Hearing Protection: Factory Records 1978-1979 – The First 10 Numbered Records And Objects and *Factory: Communications 1978-92* include rare and unheard material, while the exhibition Use Hearing Protection gathers together some of the iconic artwork created by the label's creative director Peter Saville. *Use Hearing Protection,* released on 11 October, includes *The Factory Sample EP* (FAC 2), *All Night Party* by A Certain Ratio (FAC 5), *Electricity* by Orchestral Manoeuvres

In The Dark (FAC 6) and *Unknown Pleasures* by Joy Division (FACT 10) as well as three posters, a short film, stationery, an egg timer and a 60-page book. The second box, released in November, includes 63 tracks on eight remastered discs.

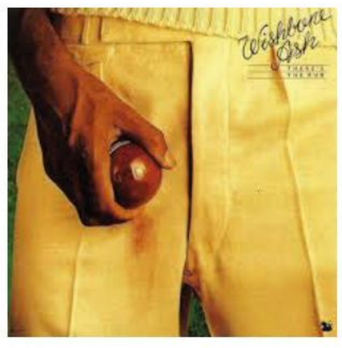
300+

The number of tables selling vinyl at the two-day London Music Mania record fair. Held on 26/27 October, it's the UK's biggest event of its kind. See the website at www.vip-24.com for details.

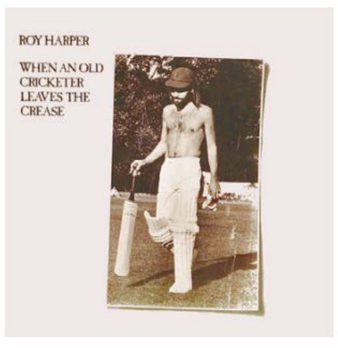
CAN YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING?

Mark Lanegan has announced details of a new solo album, *Somebody's Knocking*, out on 18 October. Recorded in an 11-day session in Lanegan's home city of L.A, the album is an eclectic listen, informed by the former Screaming Trees frontman's long-standing love of electronic music.

4 OF A KIND... Cricket



WISHBONE ASH
THERE'S THE RUB
It may not be an album about cricket, but the Hipgnosis-designed cover for the Torquay blues rockers' fifth album is as quintessentially English as an afternoon of light drizzle at Lord's.



ROY HARPER
WHEN AN OLD CRICKETER LEAVES THE CREASE
Harper's poetic paean to village cricket features the Grimethorpe Colliery Band. John Peel asked for it to be aired when he died.

JAH THOMAS
CRICKET LOVELY CRICKET
DJ Jah Thomas set up the Midnight Rock label and released this cricket-loving 7": "All you got to do is lick the ball before it reach the wicket." Indeed.

THE DUCKWORTH LEWIS METHOD
STICKY WICKETS
A second LP dedicated to the sport of kings from Neil Hannon and Thomas Walsh. It features the dapper Henry Blofeld on *It's Just Not Cricket.*

Coming Soon...

Our pick of the new vinyl releases

20 SEPTEMBER
Blink-182, *NINE* (Columbia); Efterklang, *Altid Sammen* (4AD); Robbie Robertson, *Sinematic* (UME); Hiss Golden Messenger, *Terms Of Surrender* (Merge); Keane, *Cause And Effect* (Island); Liam Gallagher, *Why Me? Why Not* (Warner); Zac Brown Band, *The Owl* (BMG); Brittany Howard, *Jamie* (ATO Records); Chastity Belt, *Chastity Belt* (Hardly Art); M83, *DSVII* (Mute)

27 SEPTEMBER
Girl Band, *The Talkies* (Rough Trade); Moon Duo, *Stars Are The Light* (Sacred Bones); Opeth, *In Cauda Venenum* (Nuclear Blast); Tegan And Sara, *Hey I'm Just Like You* (Sire); Temples, *Hot Motion* (ATO)

4 OCTOBER
Angel Olsen, *All Mirrors* (Jagjaguwar); The Menzingers, *Hello Exile* (Epitaph); Wilco, *Ode To Joy* (dBpm); Prince Fatty, *In The Viper's Shadow* (Mr Bongo)

11 OCTOBER
808 State, *Transmission Suite* (808 State); Allah Las, *LAHS* (Mexican Summer); Mark Kozelek With Petra Haden, *Joey Always Smiled* (Caldo Verde); Big Thief, *Two Hands* (4AD); Elbow, *Giants Of All Sizes* (Polydor); Lightning Bolt, *Sonic Citadel* (Thrill Jockey)

18 OCTOBER
Alter Bridge, *Walk The Sky (Napalm);* Foals, *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost Part 2 (Warner);* Mark Lanegan Band, *Somebody's Knocking (Heavenly);* Third Eye Blind, *Screamer (Mega Collider);* Battles, *Juice B Crypts (Warp)*

KEVIN CUMMINS

IAN PEEL'S

LINER NOTES

A CBS rock compilation from 1972 piqued our columnist's interest in the music, but it was the triple-gatefold sleeve that really fired his imagination

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think I've ever read an article about triple albums. So thank goodness for *Long Live Vinyl* and the space I have to offload my vinyl-related thoughts on this page. The double album, on the other hand, is very well documented. I was playing The Beatles' 'Blue' all of last weekend. And the gatefold sleeve is also one of the most celebrated artforms of modern times. My personal favourite? *Sgt. Pepper,* of course, or maybe even Frankie's W*elcome To The Pleasuredome*.

So why doesn't the double's older brother ever get a mention? And it's as if the triple-gatefold sleeve never even existed. I might be over-egging the triple's importance in the grand scheme of things because of the part it played in my formative vinyl-collecting years. I say collecting because this actually pre-dates my vinyl-buying lifetime. Back in the very early 80s, I loved the occasional moment to flip through the record collection of a particularly cool and hip uncle of mine. He was in a band himself, and cut a now-immensely collectable punk 7", but that's another story for another column.

In his collection, I found a triple-disc compilation – *The Music People* – and was blown away by the whole package: three LPs, a three-part gatefold foldout sleeve adorned with photos and biogs that formed a Who's Who of early-70s rock. It's not an area I venture into very often now, but I could tell immediately this was a triple-whammy doorway into another world. I asked if I could borrow the album, was kindly allowed to and, I have to confess, almost 40 years later, I'm still not ready to hand it back.

Checking Discogs for more info on *The Music People* this month yielded little detail. It was released in 1972 on CBS, with UK and US editions. As to why is it was released, well someone at CBS clearly, thankfully, saw a market for a Who's Who of the rock groups from the year I was born. From the well-known (Bob Dylan, The Byrds, Kris Kristofferson) to those rather more lost in the mists of time: David Clayton-Thomas, Edgar Winter's White Trash and Genya Ravan.

I asked if I could borrow the album. 40 years on, I'm still not ready to hand it back

Sitting in on a Radio 2 session for Jools Holland's show a few years ago, at his *Prisoner*-esque London house-come-studio, I happened to bump into Rod Argent. He was there to talk about the reformation and 50th anniversary of The Zombies. But I just wanted to ask him about *Hold Your Head Up*, the track by his early-70s, post-Zombies project Argent, that appeared on the third disc of my favourite triple LP.

Argent aside, it was the psychedelic group names that captured my imagination: New Riders Of The Purple Sage, It's A Beautiful Day and Fishbaugh, Fishbaugh & Zorn. And, most of all, The Mahavishnu Orchestra with John McLaughlin. Their track *Dawn* opened up Side E and remains one of my favourite 70s rock moments of all time. Still getting a spin on at least an annual basis, *Dawn* (from their 1971 debut *The Inner Mounting Flame*) is the jewel in the crown of this 40-year borrowed, hipster uncle-approved epitome of the triple LP.

THE VINYLIST STEVE HAMPSHIRE

It started with Bob Dylan's *Nashville Skyline* and it's just kept going

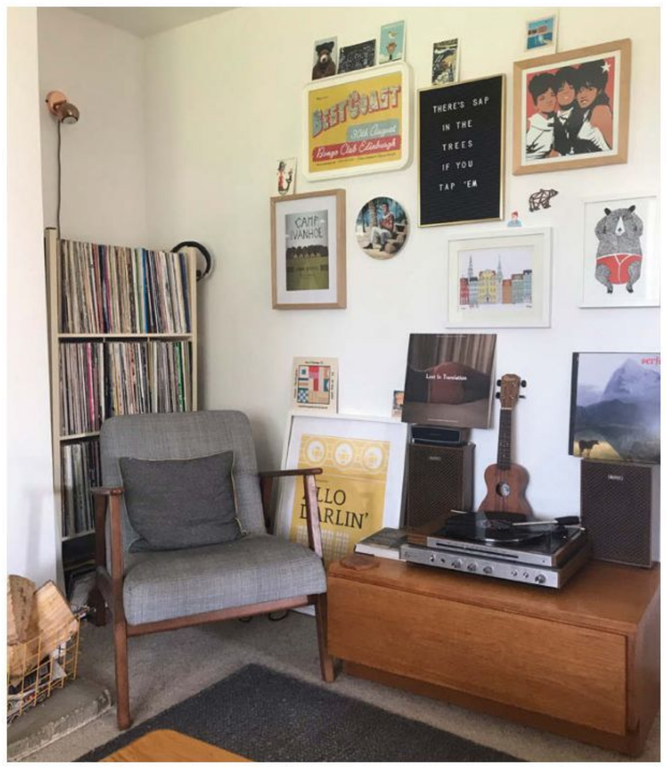
What was the first record you bought?
"I was a 90s child, and CDs were the future, right? My first LP was *Nashville Skyline*, bought when I was 18 in 1997 from a vintage shop in Exmouth. At that time, I had only heard the usual Dylan songs, such as, *Mr. Tambourine Man* and *Blowin' In The Wind*, but one listen to this and I was gobsmacked! Such a personal and intimate record, with Bob embracing country heartbreak on the duet with Johnny Cash *Girl From The North Country*, alongside songs such as *Lay Lady Lay* and *I Threw It All Away*. It's still my most played record ever!"

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"The two artists which can do no wrong in my eyes are Bill Callahan (Smog) and David Berman (Silver Jews, Purple Mountains), the latter who so tragically took his own life earlier this year. I also love soul and Motown, The Velvet Underground, Lee Hazlewood, *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*-era Byrds, alongside American lo-fi indie such as Yo La Tengo, Low and Beat Happening. Recently, I have also been swept away by the wonky, Welsh weirdness of Cate Le Bon, Sweet Baboo, H Hawkline and Meilyr Jones."

How many records do you have?
"Recently, I thought I should do the grown-up thing and look into insuring my records separately, and it was the first time I had ever counted them. It is approximately 1,000 LPs, which is growing at a pretty pace, with so many brilliant releases this year."

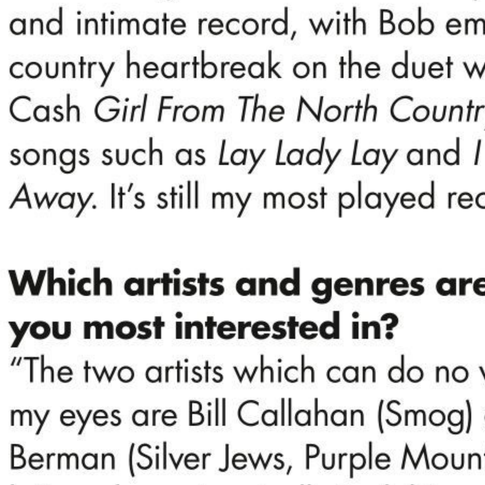
What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"I am not into checking the prices on Discogs. At a guess, I would say the Nick Drake boxset *Fruit Tree* must be fairly valuable. Or maybe one of the recent Record Store Day releases, like the *Lost In Translation* soundtrack which everyone was scrabbling around after."

What's the holy grail record that you'd most like to own?
"For the past couple of years, I have searched high and wide for Sweet Baboo's *The Marc Riley BBC Sessions* to no avail. Money is waiting for any kind person out there who's willing to part."

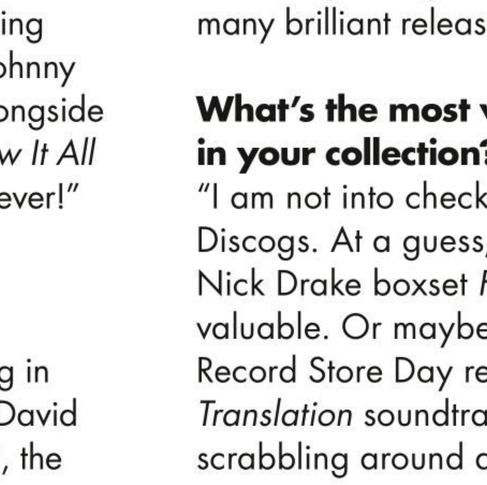


What's your listening setup?
"I am a genuine Luddite and tend to stick to vintage turntables and speakers, which in my opinion adds to that warm, fuzzy tone, although that might just be because my record player is old and knackered. For the last five years I have had a Sony HMP-20 from the late 70s, and am dreading the day it finally gives up the ghost."

MOST VALUABLE VINYL

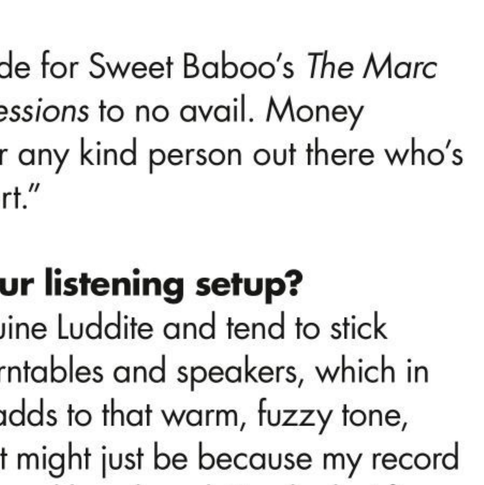


MOTÖRHEAD
NO REMORSE
1984 UK limited edition 24-track double compilation LP, complete with original illustrated inners and in special embossed black leather sleeve. As it says on the back of the cover, "Play Loud!" (MOTOR1)
£75



TALK TALK
SPIRIT OF EDEN
1988 UK first press 6-track LP, complete with lyric inner and picture sleeve. A departure from the early synth-pop incarnation of the band, this is a mature, almost jazz-like at times, work of sheer brilliance (PCSD105).
£50

THE BEATLES
ABBEY ROAD
Very rare 1978 UK Green export-only issue of 1969 16-track LP, with 'an EMI Recording' text on the light green labels and 'Her Majesty' credit, fully laminated picture sleeve. These were never available in UK shops except as re-imports. (PCS7088)
£295

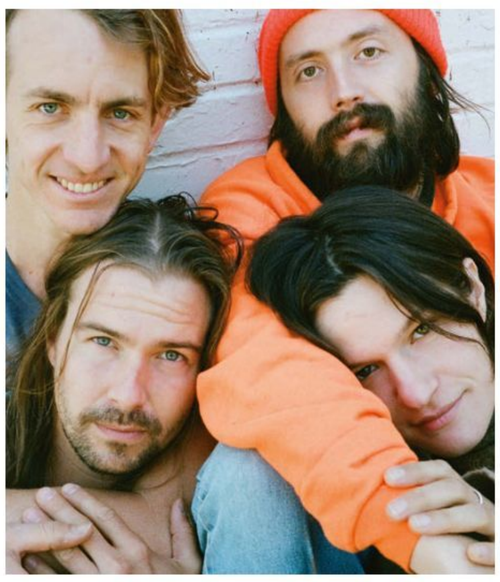


R.E.M.
MONSTER
The Athens outfit's classic 1994 German-pressed 12-track vinyl LP, complete with illustrated credits inner and picture sleeve.
£75

Now Spinning

We've been trying to pretend it's not absolutely bucketing it down oustide with cans of Kona Brewing Co's Big Wave, a tropical golden ale, and these 12 essential tracks…

Something **The Beatles** (UMC)
Catfish Kate **Pixies** (BMG)
Calm Down… **Ezra Furman** (Bella Union)
James Bond **Iggy Pop** (Loma Vista/Caroline)
Hey, Ma **Bon Iver** (Jagjaguwar)
Lately **Metronomy** (Because Music)
My Wing **Hiss Golden Messenger** (Merge)
Try **Pete Yorn** (Shelly Music)
Together Tomorrow **Oh Sees** (Castleface)
Ashes To Ashes **Jenny Hval** (Sacred Bones)
Fabula Mendax **Monochrome Set** (Tapete)
Love Is Everywhere **Wilco** (DBPM)



Big Thief's Celestial Twin

New York band return with second album in six months

Barely have we weaned ourselves off New York quartet Big Thief's *U.F.O.F* album, released in May, than news reaches us of a follow-up. Described by the band as *U.F.O.F*'s "celestial twin", *Two Hands* is due out on 11 October through 4AD.

While the band's third album was recorded in the shady calm of Bear Creek Studios in Washington state, this time round Adrianne Lenker and co. braved the searing temperatures of the Sonic Ranch studio near El Paso, just a stone's throw from the Mexican border. *Long Live Vinyl*'s early listens reveal a visceral live-recorded album, with lyrics concerned with the climate crisis. The band have also announced a show at London's Eventim Apollo on 27 February.

MICHAEL BUISHAS

RHINO PLASTICY

We've been tipped off that The Human League's *Octopus*, Echo & The Bunnymen's *Shine So Hard* and The Futureheads' self-titled debut will be getting the limited edition vinyl treatment by Rhino UK. All will be available in limited numbers only through the new www.Rhino.co.uk store.

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CHASTITY BELT

Washington friends unlock their purpose on dreamy fourth album

Sometimes you need to step back from a situation to fully appreciate where you are and plot your next move. In 2018, approaching their 10th year as a band, Washington state four-piece Chastity Belt cancelled a looming tour, taking time out to each record solo material, play in other bands and reassess their reasons for making music.

With writing already under way for what would become their fourth album and follow-up to 2017's *I Used To Spend So Much Time Alone,* the break helped the group of friends, Julia Shapiro (vocals, guitar), Lydia Lund (vocals, guitar), Gretchen Grimm (drums, vocals, guitar) and Annie Truscott (bass) to take stock. Grimm describes the purpose as "trying to weed out the parts of being in a band that feel like obligation and sticking to things that feel like a true expression of us." The hiatus resulted in a self-titled record that is a perfect distillation of Chastity Belt's swirling, moody dream-state sound.

Gauzy guitars and somnambulant harmonised vocals meld together luxuriantly, with the lead single *Elena* inspired by the four's shared love of novelist Elena Ferrante; elsewhere, the subject matter diverges between playfully tongue in cheek asides and existential fear, with lead singer Shapiro hinting at having come through an uncertain period on opener *Ann's Jam*: "Now there's a thick fog around everything I learn/ And I just kill time by dreading everything."

The time apart had galvanised both band and friendships. "Having experiences, writing solo material and playing in other bands outside of playing in Chastity Belt was really helpful during the recording process," says Shapiro, who released her debut solo album, *Perfect Vision,* in April. "Expanding our musical horizons brought fresh ideas and the confidence to explore new sounds."

Expanding those horizons partly meant working with LA producer and firm friend Melina Duterte, also known as solo artist Jay Som. "She was a wonderful asset to have in the studio with us," says Shapiro. "We felt strongly about working with someone we are really comfortable with and whose music and production we admire. We've all been friends with Melina for a while and we knew she would bring good energy and a creative ear to our songs. We sometimes have a hard time coming to a decision about tones or ideas as a group, so having Melina in the studio with us was both reassuring and calming."

The support of the band's label, Sub Pop subsidiary Hardly Art, also proved important as the band pressed pause before making their most fully realised album yet. "They give us a lot of creative freedom, which is something that is really important to us," says Shapiro.

"We joke that people are always pointing out each record is more mature than the last, but there is some truth to that. When we first started playing together, we were still getting comfortable playing our instruments. Now we've been a band for nearly 10 years, we have definitely improved, gained confidence and life experience that is reflected in the sound and evolution of our music."

Batteries recharged, focus re-established and a new album about to hit the streets, attention turns to a European tour that runs throughout September and October. Have they regained their appetite for the road? "Honestly yeah!" says Shapiro. "We're so excited to tour again."

BETO BARKMO

[PIAS]

ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BEAR TREE SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • COOL DISC DERRY • CRAS
PROBE LIVERPOOL • RAPTURE WITNEY • RAVES FROM THE GRAVE FROME • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY •

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THE JUAN MACLEAN

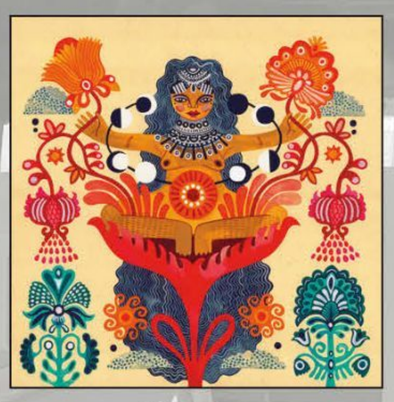
THE BRIGHTER THE LIGHT

DFA

SIR WAS

HOLDING ON TO A DREAM

Memphis Industries



KEFAYA & ELAHA SOROOR

SONGS OF OUR MOTHERS

Bella Union

FAD GADGET

THE BEST OF FAD GADGET

Mute

LIFE

A PICTURE OF GOOD HEALTH

Afghan Moon

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DILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA • POLAR BEAR BIRMINGHAM
HAMPTON • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD • WORLD OF ECHO LONDON

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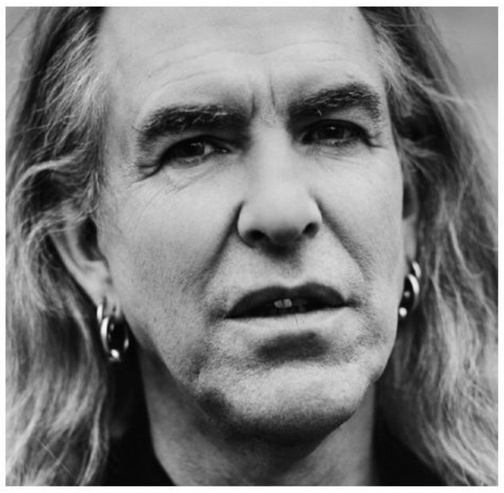
ANSMISSION MARGATE • TRUCK STORE OXFORD • UNDERGROUND SOLU'SHN EDINBURGH

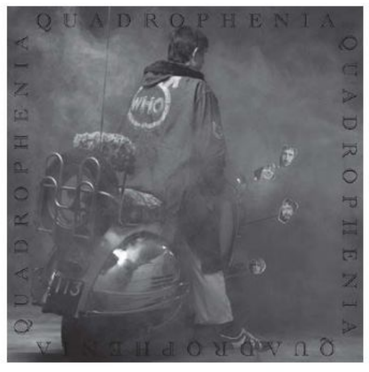
IN • FRIENDLY BRISTOL • GATEFIELD SOUNDS WHITSTABLE • GATEFOLD HITCHIN • HONEST JONS LONDON • JAM FALMOUTH • JUMBO LEEDS • LEFT FOR DEAD SHREWSBURY • LET IT ROLL CAMDEN • LEVEL CROSSING MO
ERSE LONDON • SOUTH SOUTHEND • SPILLERS CARDIFF • SPINDIZZY DUBLIN • SQUARE WIMBORNE • STRANGER THAN PARADISE LONDON • SWORDFISH BIRMINGHAM • TALLBIRD CHESTERFILED • TOWER DUBLIN • TR



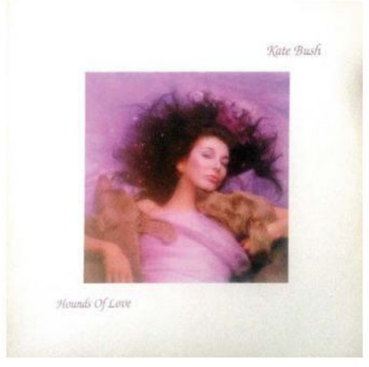
CRATE DIGGING WITH...
NEW MODEL ARMY

On the eve of their 40th anniversary and fresh from the release of new album *From Here*, the band's singer **Justin Sullivan** digs deep

VARIOUS ARTISTS
MOTOWN CHARTBUSTERS
"This music is my first love… Through its golden era, the Motown family, which is not quite the right word for it, produced the greatest pop music ever made – much of it underpinned by my favourite musician, James Jamerson. I could talk all day about this…"



THE WHO
QUADROPHENIA
"My favourite rock record… a story album of crashing drums and guitars, soaring Mellotron, orchestration, sound effects, turbulent, restless atmospheres and male angst. An absolute one-off. And the film was pretty good, too."

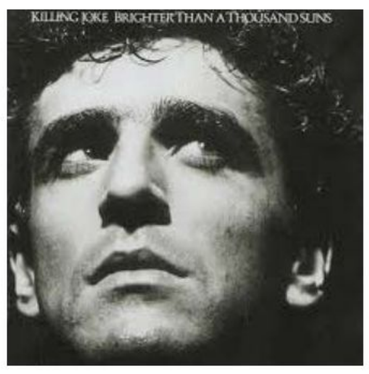


KATE BUSH
HOUNDS OF LOVE
"I could pick so many Kate Bush tracks, but for an album, it's this classic – a truly creative collection full of passion and a wealth of original musical ideas."

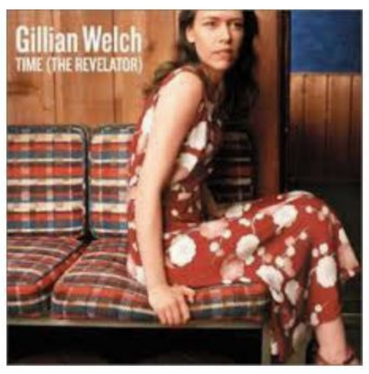
ARVO PART
TABULA RASA
"I listen to quite a lot of modern orchestral music, particularly this school of Baltic composers (of which Arvo Part is the best known). Always melodic and otherworldly. Sometimes, it can be incredibly complex, but the end result is always one of simplicity and beauty."

VARIOUS ARTISTS
200% DYNAMITE!
"I grew up in the 1960s listening to a lot of Jamaican music – a sort of pre-reggae. There are many compilations of this vintage material, but the recent *Dynamite* series (*100%*, *200%*, *300%*, etc) is my favourite, focusing on obscure rocksteady and ska tracks, as well as better known hits. Timeless."

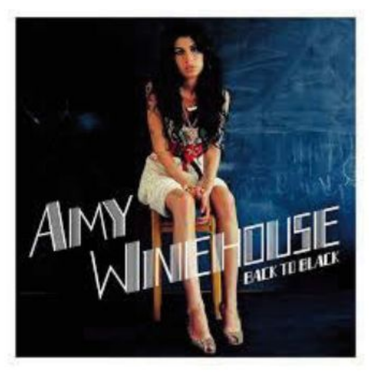
CYPRESS HILL
TEMPLES OF BOOM
"I went through a big hip-hop phase for a while – favourites obviously including the first NWA album and several of Dr Dre's other creations, but there is a particular black humour, voodoo spirit and staccato weirdness that runs through this that is permanently appealing."



KILLING JOKE
BRIGHTER THAN A THOUSAND SUNS
"A band of flawed genius, searching for some mystical ground between beauty and savagery. This record tends more towards beauty, but I think that all their albums from every different era are worth listening to."



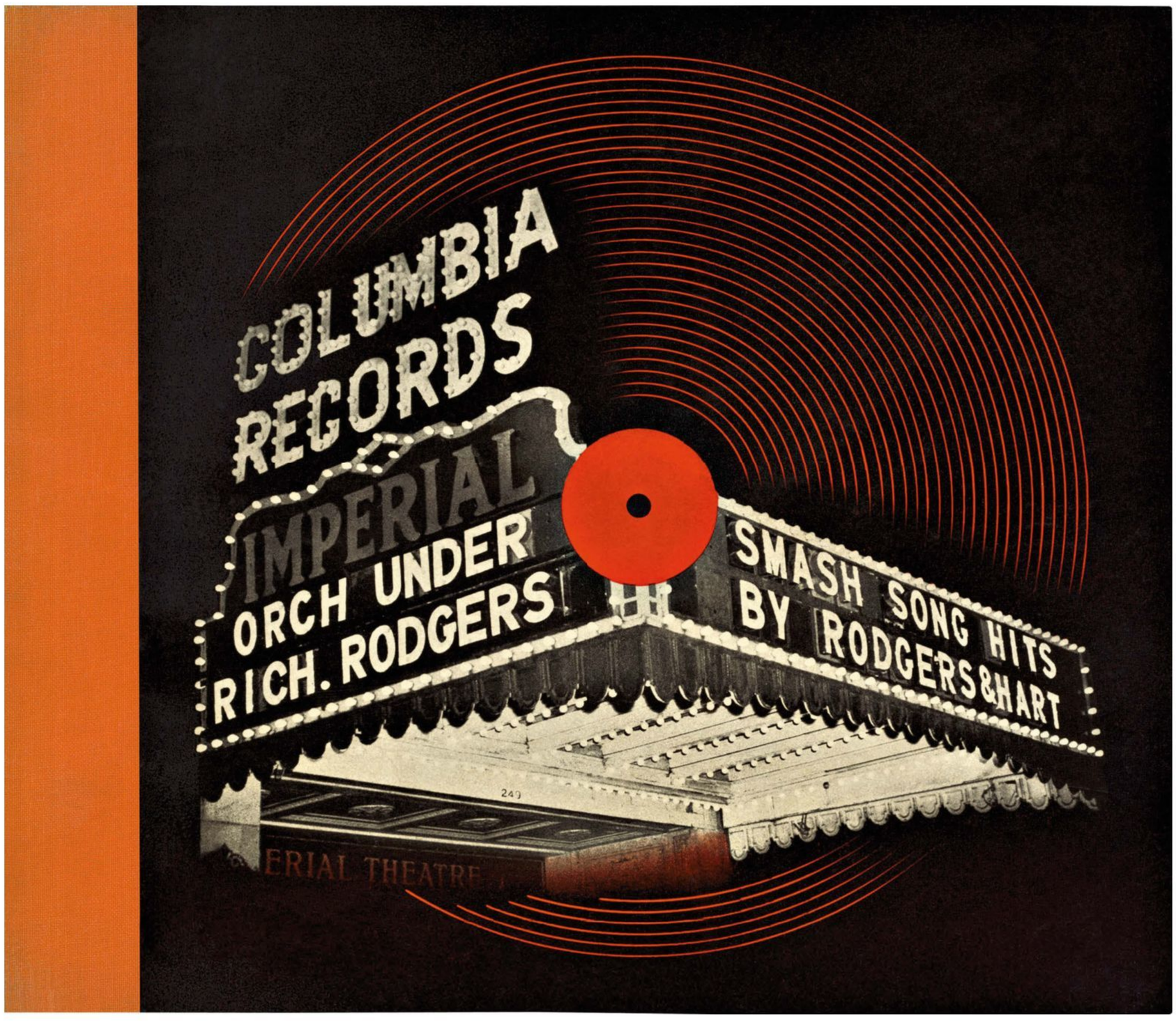
GILLIAN WELCH
TIME (THE REVELATOR)
"I could pick any of her albums, really. She's a wonderful writer and in seamless synchronicity with Dave Rawlings. It's musically spellbinding."



AMY WINEHOUSE
BACK TO BLACK
"Just because of her tragedy and the fact that this album is so familiar to everyone doesn't diminish its basic emotional power – the writing, singing, playing and recording are so perfect."

NEIL YOUNG
HARVEST
"I am a big fan of Neil Young as a guitarist and I love the various Crazy Horse excesses, but this is the other side and perhaps the most complete album: beautifully written and beautifully delivered."

RACHEL ROUSSEAU



#29 Smash Hits By Rodgers & Hart

RICHARD RODGERS & THE IMPERIAL ORCHESTRA

Alex Steinweiss is widely credited as the man who invented the album cover. In 1939, he was a 23-year-old newly employed as art director of Columbia Records. Struck with the inspired idea that albums should no longer be hidden away in dull plain paper sleeves, he went in to see his bosses with a plan that would lead to records becoming the objects of visual desire they are today. After getting the green light, the cheeky shoot for this 1940 78 took place at New York's Imperial Theatre, where as darkness fell Steinweiss convinced the owner to rearrange the venue signage to read 'Smash Song Hits by Rodgers & Hart', his photographer took the shot, and the first album cover was born. Steinweiss' expensive gamble paid off, with sales rising by 900 per cent after the album cover was introduced. "I had such ambition that I was willing to go way beyond what the hell they paid me for," he later recalled. "I wanted people to look at the artwork and hear the music." Steinweiss went on to work for London, Decca and Everest Records, designing over 2,000 sleeves. His work was celebrated in a Taschen edition fittingly entitled *Alex Steinweiss, The Inventor Of The Modern Album Cover*.

MARK AND COLLEEN HAYWARD/GETTY

PLASTIC ONO BAND

TORONTO, 1969

From left, Alan White, Eric Clapton, Klaus Voormann, John Lennon and Yoko Ono giving peace a chance by the pool the day after the Plastic Ono Band headlined the Toronto Rock 'n' Roll Revival at Varsity Stadium in Toronto. The band's first show, on 13 September 1969, was hastily arranged and kept a secret until the day of the performance. Clapton remembers having to talk a heroin-addicted Lennon out of cancelling. "John just stood in the dressing room, which was admittedly rather tatty, beforehand saying, 'What am I doing here? I could have gone to Brighton!' After all, it was a long way to go for just one concert."

The show went on, with Lennon taking vocals for *Blue Suede Shoes*, *Money (That's What I Want)*, *Dizzy Miss Lizzy*, *Yer Blues*, *Cold Turkey* and *Give Peace A Chance*, before Yoko took over for *Don't Worry Kyoko (Mummy's Only Looking For Her Hand In The Snow)* and *John, John (Let's Hope For Peace)*. ●

LILY HOLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

TERRY RILEY
A RAINBOW IN CURVED AIR

CHARLES HAZLEWOOD

The international conductor and musical revolutionary tells **Gary Walker** why Terry Riley's *A Rainbow In Curved Air* was the catalyst for his career in music

A Rainbow In Curved Air is the fundamental backbone of my whole cultural life. I went to primary school in Gloucestershire and had this extraordinary, cool old hippie music teacher called Mr Edmonds. His idea of a good music lesson was to take the whole class into the hall, sit us down and play either *The Dark Side Of The Moon* or *A Rainbow In Curved Air* at ear-bleeding volume. When the record finished, he'd say, 'That's it, see you next week'. I spent the best part of a year listening to it and it changed everything, I learnt so much. I didn't know about overdubbing or minimalism, all I knew is that Terry Riley had done everything on it.

I was a basic organ player already and it blew my tiny mind. I was a choir boy, learning a lot of religious music, which is all goal-oriented, and you can say that of most rock 'n' roll, too. Everything is leading you from point A to B to C to D. This was a new world order, because it's all based on one chord. A Major was always bright yellow for me in those days, I used to associate keys with colours, so I had this whole 25-minute piece in yellow but without for one second becoming monotonous.

The connection was totally immediate and it became my most rampant desire to own a Hammond organ. It began a lifelong quest to burrow in deep to the eternal now; it had a direct impact on my own musical development. At the age of nine or 10, I was a rampant improviser and remember doing these longform improvisations in church, all based around one tonality, just as Terry Riley tells you in *A Rainbow In Curved Air*. It was unlike anything anyone else was playing in church at that time. I think most people probably thought I was a bit mad… I probably was.

I know Terry really well now and I cannot over-emphasise his generosity of spirit. Most composers tend to be quite controlling, but Terry's pieces are like open invitations. He's now writing a new piece of the big *Minimalism* project we're doing in the autumn. We're deeply honoured and thrilled he's invested in the Paraorchestra project, which we set up in 2012 to meet the fundamental problem that virtuoso musicians with disabilities are overlooked in the music industry.

When we first made a live version of *A Rainbow In Curved Air* with Will Gregory from Goldfrapp and Adrian Utley from Portishead at Glastonbury 10 or 15 years ago, I remember being in touch with Terry about it and being very anxious about playing the piece exactly as it was on the record, and he said, 'Why on earth would you want to do that?'. He said, 'This piece is like a spirit. Fly free and invest your own spirits in it and that will make me very happy'. ●

The Paraorchestra And Friends' Minimalism Changed My Life: Tones, Drones and Arpeggios is at the Southbank Centre on 28 September and The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester on 2 October

10 Questions For... FIONN REGAN

Fionn Regan released his sixth solo album, *Cala*, last month. **Gary Walker** catches up with the Mercury nominated singer-songwriter to talk about vinyl, his lost album and why Rhys Ifans has a tattoo of his lyrics on his arm

What are your earliest vinyl memories and how important is it as a format to you?
"I'm not that much of a collector, but what I'd say about vinyl is it's the ultimate way to hear music. There's something so beautiful and poetic about listening to music on vinyl. I always think about albums as having two sides. There's a halfway point, whether or not you hear the thing in a full cycle, and that's been an influence on the making of so many albums. As a format, it just works."

Your new album is called *Cala*, the Spanish word for cove. How did you settle on that title?
"I liked the way the word sounds and somehow that the songs seem to fit in… I don't know if it's a song cycle, it certainly wasn't a concept album, but it feels as if the songs have a thread and the title seemed to knit that whole narrative together, whatever that narrative is. It's such a mysterious thing when you're making an album. When you come to the end of it, it's sort of astonishing. It always feels like you're very lucky, I don't know where songs come from. I never set out with a plan, it just starts to somehow come together."

There's a fair bit of Irish imagery on this album, as well as references to Tennessee and New York. Is a sense of place important to your writing?
"Yes, New York has always been a fascinating place to me. I always feel when I'm there that there's a definite sense of artistic compatibility. There's nowhere else in the world like it. It has that incredible momentum and energy, which finds its way into the dynamo of what you're propelled to write about. I don't ever go there and not feel like I want to write."

You recorded this record at home in Bray, near Dublin, as you did your debut album, *The End Of History*. Are there any parallels between the two records?
"I think so, but it's moved somewhere. There might be some fundamental foundations and similarities. The guitar is very central on both records. It's like the lightning rod when it's working. There are parallels in a way, but it's very interesting to challenge yourself, while at other times it feels like there's an organic flow and direction you have to move with. With the acoustic guitar, it's a fundamental foundation that I return to."

How did the recording pan out? Did you work entirely alone?
"A lot of the time, I like to work for long periods alone. I have a very strong vision about what I want to get to. That vision sometimes changes and you adjust along the way, but with this album I really wanted to have the guitar and vocal as a point of focus. Other than that, I wanted to try not to get in the way of the songs too much. They were very basic things. I feel like the album has a good flow through it. I hope people will enjoy it, but you never know. I certainly feel excited."

You've been in music over 15 years and the industry has changed so much in that time. Is it still a privilege to make music in 2019?
"Of course. It has to be. To be able to make music is unparalleled in how much of a privilege it is. In everything, you take the rough with the smooth, but to be able to play music is a real privilege. The most important thing is to focus on your work. Sometimes, there are crossings where the head winds are stronger and you have to focus, but it's an absolute pleasure and lucky thing to be able to do."

You've worked with some brilliant labels – Bella Union, Heavenly and now Abbey. Have you found a place you feel at home?
"I would consider myself nomadic, so I don't know about the concept of home, I'm always moving. I've been very fortunate and lucky to be able to play music, never mind make albums. It's an amazing thing to have worked with those labels. Bella Union were there at the start, it's an amazing label with great people."

What happened to the record you made with Ethan Johns in 2008 that Lost Highway didn't release. Could we ever see that on vinyl?
"Anything is possible, but I'd probably say I don't think so. I love all those people, but sometimes that's just the way it goes."

The actor Rhys Ifans has got a tattoo saying "Be good or be gone". What did you mean with that line?
"I don't know, your guess is as good as mine. It's a certain sort of flow when you're writing, and I don't really think it means anything. Most songs are like a word game, just a collection of sounds. That's the great thing about songs, they forever change, and to one person it means something totally different from another. It's so mysterious the way songs fall together."

Have you already started thinking about your next record?
"Yes, but in a very abstract way."

"IT'S SUCH A MYSTERIOUS THING WHEN YOU'RE MAKING AN ALBUM. WHEN YOU COME TO THE END OF IT, IT'S SORT OF ASTONISHING"

AUTUMN DE WILDE

METRONOMY

On the launch of their expansive new album, **Felix Rowe** catches up with Metronomy mastermind Joe Mount to discuss his love of analogue synths, going on a 'date' with Josh Homme and not getting invited to weddings

Can we hear the sound of wedding bells in the air? Actually, to be precise, it's the sound of *Wedding*, the opening salvo of Metronomy's forthcoming magnum opus, the appropriately titled *Metronomy Forever*. The group's sixth album is a bold statement of intent, an eclectic marriage of all their best bits, from wonky electro pop to more reflective guitar jaunts.

Don't be fooled by the cosy press shots. Make no mistake, Metronomy is a dictatorship, albeit possibly the most polite, benevolent, apologetic dictatorship in history. Joe Mount is to Metronomy what Kevin Parker is to Tame Impala – a multi-instrumentalist creative tour de force, who writes and produces the act's output pretty much single-handedly from his home studio. It's a singular approach, forged on DIY experimentation, that has steadily gained Metronomy critical acclaim and a string of A-list admirers, from Lady Gaga to Josh Homme; Kanye to Daft Punk. Not bad for an unassuming South Devon lad whose first album was a collection of bedroom recordings produced when he was supposed to be studying.

Holy matrimony is a recurring fixation of the record, one that re-emerges on the similarly titled *Wedding Bells*. It could be a reflection of Mount's own coming of age and settling down to raise a family. But there's a hint of melancholy in there, too…

"Yeah, the wedding thing," begins Mount. "It's this weird preoccupation I have about not being invited to weddings… Basically, when you're in a band, you tour so much. For a long time, you'd get like texts or emails, 'There's a party, do you want to come?' and you're like, 'Shit, sorry, I'm away'. And then it all just dries up after a while and no-one bothers asking after a point. Anyway, I noticed that I don't go to any weddings and all my friends go to loads!"

Perhaps he might get a few more invites now. "Yeah," he laughs, "but I don't just want to go to any random wedding!" So, if any of Mount's recently betrothed friends are reading, unfortunately you're going to have to rejig that seating plan.

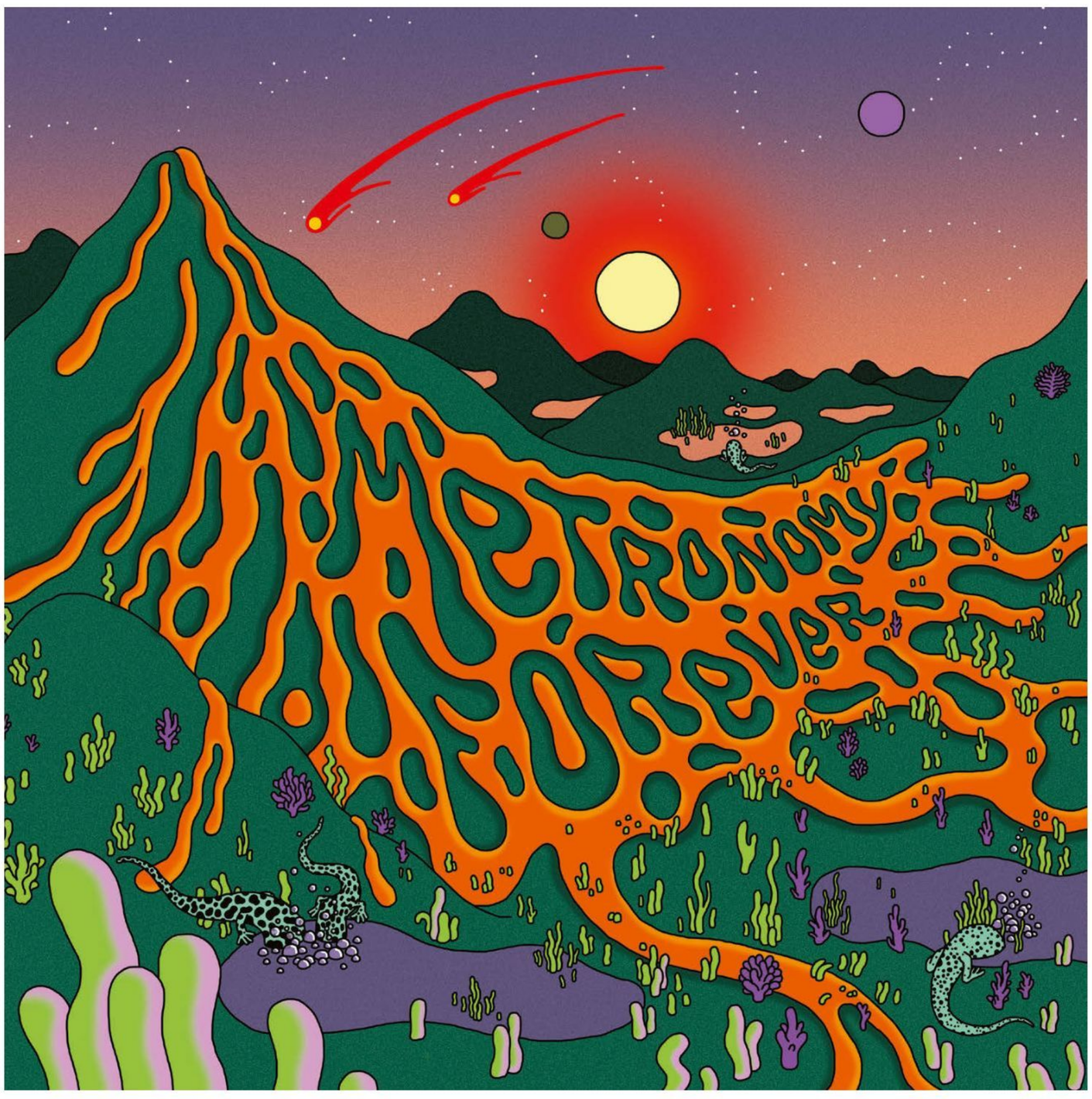
METRONOMY FOREVER

But aside from missing out on flat Cava and soggy canapés, there's plenty else to sink your teeth into. *Metronomy Forever* is a celebratory record, and infinitely playful too, often concerned with the more carnal pleasures of consummation – as on single *Salted Caramel Ice Cream*, which joyfully channels the spirit of classic 80s Prince. "She's the squash in my water," Mount coos in knowing falsetto. It's like Queen's *I Want To Break Free* on high speed dubbing – in other words, absolutely infectious. He brings the purple funk bang up to date with the lyrically on-point *Sex Emoji*, one of many standouts. But it's a record that allows itself the space to breathe, too, with candid, understated moments and instrumental transitions providing counterpoints and room for reflection.

"There was an initial intention after the last album, *Summer 08*, which we didn't tour – come back with the record that we would propel

Multi-instrumentalist Mount is both Metronomy's creative tour de force and polite, benevolent dictator

"If someone says, 'I'd like to produce your album', it's a bit like saying, 'I want to marry you'"



to the top of the charts," he says, tongue ever-so-slightly in cheek. "So, I wanted it to be this very instant thing, that was very poppy. But, the more I worked towards that idea, the worse it got. It got to the point where I had a load of tracks I'd given to various people and the reaction was like: 'I kind of preferred the older version of that song'. Then you feel like, 'Oh fuck, I just wasted six months'.

"It meant that I had to shake that all off, go back to earlier versions and just relax, you know? So, that sort of became the concept; rediscovering a simple pleasure in making a record and embracing all the different styles I like. It was realising that the way people listen to music is much more open to that kind of depth now than perhaps it was five years ago."

THE IDEA OF THE MIXTAPE

"It sounds a bit too basic an idea, but yes, the way I listen to music now is mostly on the radio or streaming on Spotify and listening to playlists," says Mount. "And playlists are mixtapes, you know? It was a big part of my youth. When I first got into DJing, I'd make mixtapes for friends and to impress girls. I was thinking, suddenly, there's this opportunity to be way more eclectic and to play with that idea. I'd gone from trying to make this efficient record to thinking: just make what you want to hear and something that reflects the way you listen to music. And that's when it started coming together. Even something sensible like, you've got to think about how it'll work live, that's still a restriction."

And then, of course, there's the rest of the band. Does Joe bring the other guys into the recording process? A big (slightly awkward) laugh. "They are another restriction, they hold me back! No, um, this record was not… Anna sings on a song and Oscar has kind of produced one of the songs, but, no, it's pretty much all just me…"

Do they try to get more involved? "No, they've kind of given up! It was never really… The band is the thing you see when you're watching Metronomy live, but no one joined thinking they were writing the songs. But by now, we've been doing it together for so long that everyone understands how it works. Sometimes, when I say that, it sounds a bit aggressive or weird but, I mean, it's nothing…"

GO WEST

Another recurring theme that tends to seep its way into Mount's work is his childhood stomping ground, Devon's south coast.

"When I was doing *Nights Out*, *English Riviera*," he explains, "it was more to do with this kind of fantasy of how I saw Torquay when I was younger. I imagined it as a big city, and then taking that idea and imagining it was a bit like California, where there's this music scene and attitude. Obviously, there wasn't really a

Mount onstage with Anna Prior and Olugbenga Adelekan

music scene, so it was a bit more of a fantastical theme. And, I think now it becomes this kind of weird crutch, you know? The places from the English Riviera, it's like a pretend nostalgia for something that never existed anyway. You know, if I was to really intellectualise it – which I wouldn't normally do! – it's a bit like this place where you can write songs about, in the same way as those recurring characters in Beatles songs. I guess once you've created this universe, you don't need to rely on your own experience of something."

THE DATING GAME

The English Riviera resonated with a wider audience, turning Mount from a purveyor of sophisticated, wonky, but often inaccessible bedroom electro-pop to a byword for the uber cool – a label that no doubt makes him squirm. Coupled with a swelling live reputation, it was the record that put Metronomy on the map. Indeed, there's probably only one thing slightly cooler than working with Josh Homme, and that's being the one who turned him down…

The suggestion is received with another of those sheepish laughs. "It wasn't… the situation was, and is, way more of a very gentle thing. I was obsessed with *Songs For the Deaf* and was forever trying to replicate his guitar sound. And then, in one of those magical ways that music works, he ending up hearing *The English Riviera* and his family, like, totally got into that record.

"He got in touch and we met him a few times when we were in America. I think he thought it was a band, that we were all writing together, and it was kind of like him saying, 'I'd love to produce you guys'. And I had to say to him, 'No, it's like you, it's what you do… the sound of Queens Of The Stone Age is you'. And I think the albums that haven't been produced by him haven't been the best ones, you know? So it was kind of like, with enormous respect, I politely declined. You feel a bit mad, but I'd love to work with him in something else… His sound is so identifiable. If you listen to the Arctic Monkeys record he made, it sounds like him. I guess I see myself as someone who's like him. He's made me become the sort of musician and producer I am."

And then our familiar theme returns. "There's also something to be said for working with people. If someone says, 'Yeah, I'd like to produce your album', it's a bit like saying, 'I want to marry you'. You could say, like, 'Hey, I think you're really nice, but let's have some dates first! You know, let's check each other out and see what happens!' I'm very up for trying stuff out, but I'm wary to just jump in like that, in the deep end."

And that's what happened with Swedish pop songstress Robyn, whose 2018 album *Honey* Mount co-produced, to universal critical acclaim. "That was actually a proper… we went on a few dates," he chuckles. "Like, not literally, but we did a few little sessions, and then after

OLD-SKOOL SCRATCHIN'

A long appreciation of turntablism led to a collaboration with scratch legend and Beastie Boy beat-maker Mix Master Mike on *Old Skool* (featured on 2016's *Summer 08*). "He was someone that I was very into in my late teens," Mount explains. "I was listening to the Beastie Boys and getting into DJing and trying to scratch, and then, he had a record, *Anti-Theft Device*. Anyway, it was a really good record and quite musical. Like, at least, more than just a scratch DJ's record. I had a few other scratch DJs' records and they weren't very good. So, I got to a point where I thought, I want a scratch break on this record and I'm probably now able to get in touch with him one way or another. And so, it was a manager-getting-in-touch-with-a-manager type thing, you know? Quite business-like! But, yeah, fulfilling a proper childhood dream… It was all very modern."

Magnum opus: Metronomy's soon-to-be-released sixth album is an eclectic collection of all their best bits

a period of six months or longer, she was like, 'I'd like you to produce my record'. She got down on one knee! And then I didn't really hear from her for ages and I thought, 'Oh well, it's not happened'. But it ended up taking a long time and was very involved… To have done all of that work, and then to have released that record that went down so well, was very rewarding."

VINYL THOUGHTS

So, as a self-confessed cratedigger turned Spotify convert, we're keen for Mount's take on the value of the physical format. But he won't be drawn into taking sides. "I think it's just an option," he counters. "I don't think that a physical piece of vinyl or a CD is necessarily better." That said, he concedes, "being able to interact with music in a way that doesn't involve a screen is quite incredible… So, it has a value in that sense, in the same way that reading a book instead of reading a Kindle is a bit nicer… literally that it's not a monitor, it's a thing and you can hold it, and it's not going to run out of batteries."

But what about artists getting paid? Streaming services are notoriously lax on that front. "I think, it's in a period at the moment where it's all in flux and will sort itself out. It's not good for young artists – that's not good. But, it wasn't particularly good that I had to fork out 10 quid to buy a Soul Asylum album that was shit!" he laughs. "I'm joking, but there's also a thought that, like, people were being forced…" He pauses to distill his thoughts. "The music industry was unfairly in control of the value of music. They were deciding the price of CDs, they were selling them, they were making all the money – that was a bit unrealistic."

When it comes to creating, however, he's a sucker for analogue gear. "That's where I do think that things need to be tactile, when you're making music. And, so I ended up collecting… well, I have a lot of old vintage synthesisers and those are things that I really covet and treasure. But I use them all, I mean every single thing I use and I get it for that reason. I don't just want it to be something that looks good! I've always been an opportunist, so I look for stuff that's not ridiculously expensive and easy enough to get your hands on. I just go on eBay!"

It's this steadfast analogue approach that helps to inject Mount's characteristic human warmth into Metronomy's output, and has led to him becoming an increasingly in-demand producer and remixer. He remains determined, as ever, not to dilute his vision, even when tempted by those childhood heroes. This means cleaving to his DIY ethos, even if the purpose-built home studio is a little grander these days than the student digs where he cut his teeth. It has served him well so far. As he notes on the vocoder-heavy transition, *Forever Is A Long Time*. It is indeed, but we reckon he's in it for the long haul. Until death do us part. ●

CRATEDIGGING IN TOTNES

Joe maintains a connection with Drift, a record shop in his hometown Totnes (Metronomy played its festival, Sea Change, this summer). He recounts a memorable vinyl hunting moment back in his youth. "I was buying a lot of records and trying to be a bit of a cratedigger. So, for a long time, I had a massive mixture of crap from charity shops and then things that I was buying… I remember a friend bought 10 imported copies of the first Eminem record, because he loved it, and then sold them on to his mates. Then I had this amazing thing once when I used to go round the charity shops in Totnes, where I grew up. I went into a Rowcroft Hospice and they'd just put out some new records that someone had brought in – they were all in the proper record collector's sleeves. All the records there were 50p each, and I was picking stuff out that I knew. So there was *What's Going On* by Marvin Gaye, *Exodus* by Bob Marley, then there was stuff that I didn't know, this Todd Rundgren record, *Runt*, Steely Dan, *Pretzel Logic*, *Houses Of The Holy*, basically a classic record collector's record collection, just dumped in Rowcroft Hospice in mint condition! I spent 10 quid on 20 records, or whatever, and I kept all the ones that I was interested in, then took all the rest down the road to the proper record shop and sold them for four or five quid each. So I had this amazing day of making loads of money! And out of that collection, it was the first time that I ever heard *What's Going On*, and I think it's a first press – which I think is kind of valuable."

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Some irreversible catastrophes have happened. I know we're supposed to be positive, but I also need to make space to feel negative. If you don't know there's an emergency, you can't react to it

For his latest album, *Twelve Nudes*, Ezra Furman revisited his punk-rock roots. In doing so, he channelled all his energy into a collection of songs that confront the issues of living in a broken society. He found the experience both liberating and cathartic. **Huw Baines** listens to his rallying cry

Furman acknowledges punk rocker Jay Reatard and Canadian poet Anne Carson as the album's spiritual heroes

Way back in the mid-90s, Joe Strummer sent a fax containing his thoughts on Bruce Springsteen to a filmmaker who was assembling a documentary about New Jersey's favourite son. The legendary Clash frontman's excitement popped in all caps as he described the liberating power of the Boss's music for those who woke each day under slate grey British skies. "Just when you need some spirit and some proof that the big wide world exists, the DJ puts on *Racing In The Street* and life seems worth living again," he wrote. "Life seems to be in Cinemascope again."

In the early months of 2018, Ezra Furman released a record that sent him hurtling along a highway through the sort of widescreen rock 'n' roll wilderness that captivated Strummer. It's a rare feat for an artist to ensnare that sense of abandon so completely, but *Transangelic Exodus* was just that: a rare feat. After turning the key in a red Camaro, Furman drove all night, lipstick smeared and thrift-store dress dancing in the wind, rattling through songs that coalesced into a sparkling concept album turned road novel turned queer outlaw romance.

Its many highlights banded together to investigate ideas of escape and defiance, mainlining the modern American dystopia through lurid imagery and immaculate melodies. With a proto-fascist government snapping at their heels, intent on spreading a racist gospel, destroying LGBTQ communities, and further marginalising people already existing on the fringes, Furman and his (trans) angelic companion stumbled on a sort of euphoria after ingesting a cocktail of fleeting freedom and all-consuming fear. "With *Transangelic Exodus,* we used fiction to get at something true about what it feels like to live in the West at this moment," Furman says.

But with that adventure over, he has opted to approach things from a different angle on his new record, *Twelve Nudes*. Its songs are shorter and sharper, channelling his punk youth in an often furious attempt to address an oppressive, broken society dominated by bad dudes who've become accustomed to getting away with it. Furman has pointedly dropped the fictitious filter, instead plugging us into his brain as he reckons with bleak thoughts and a sense of hopelessness. "As dark as *Transangelic Exodus* was sometimes, I had a strong impulse to kinda rally the troops and say, 'Don't despair, we're going to make it together'," he says.

"But this… things are bad and some irreversible catastrophes have happened. How bad does that really feel? I know we're supposed to be positive and constructive, but I've started to realise I also need to make space to feel negative. I'm a realist, a dark optimist, I would say. I feel like there's something positive or forward-thinking in going into negativity like this. If you don't know there's an emergency, you can't react to it."

In contrast to the fastidiously curated, yet expansive palette of *Transangelic Exodus*, it's perhaps necessary that *Twelve Nudes* arrives with plenty of dirt still caked under its fingernails. It was recorded quickly, across a matter of weeks rather than months, in Furman's on-off base in Oakland, California, with the emphasis on getting in a room and playing rather than sitting behind a console and thinking about what you'll eventually get around to playing.

Its punk heritage is readily apparent, reflecting the urgency of the message: admitting that shit's fucked can be seen as step one in trying to make positive changes. After penning *My Teeth Hurt*, one of the album's standout three-chord ragers, Furman realised that the die was cast for the piece as a whole. "I had a suspicion that we might be doing something a little more raw and punky next, but that was the first new song that was like, 'Oh, I think this is the kind of song I'm going to write for a little while'," he says.

> **After making a very studied record, I just got the urge, or impulse, of rock 'n' roll. 'Let's just do it'**

"We took a lot longer making *Transangelic Exodus*, something like eight months, and it was in the writing stages a long time before that. After making a very studied record, I just got the urge, or impulse, of rock 'n' roll, like, 'Let's just fuckin' do it'. Don't think about it too carefully. Right after we finished the last one, I went way into punk. Me and Sam [Durkes], the drummer, were trading punk rarities and making playlists and stuff.

"We were naturally feeling like, 'Man, I wanna play'. We'd edited all these takes together into this careful, layered, baroque pop thing, but we were like, 'Can we just play now?' I don't want to throw shade on the last record, I'm really proud of it and it also had a lot of immediate, raw moments, but we were very diligent in taking the most real moments and falsely putting them next to each other."

RAW POWER

Punk was Furman's first musical love. It was a gateway into a world that felt like his own rather than something he shared with his parents – and he spent his teen years leaning hard into Green Day and the Sex Pistols. These days, he still looks to Iggy Pop as an idealised live figure whose raw power he can aspire to emulate, and it was perhaps inevitable that he'd eventually unearth these roots again. On *Twelve Nudes*, punk's teeth-bared, contradictory nature feeds into a lyric sheet that seeks to break everything down before building it back up again.

"I think the theme of the record, I've slowly realised, is facing the fact that you're in pain, whether that's on a global scale or a micro, personal, dental hygiene scale," Furman says. "I really value punk for not being a 'Hey, don't feel bad, everything's actually OK' kind of voice, but instead being a voice of 'Things are not OK, feel how bad this is and respond appropriately'."

He adds: "Why can I listen to someone screaming, 'No future!' and feel like, 'Well, now we're getting somewhere'? I think what 'no future' really means is 'not this future'. Not the future that I've grown up thinking is the future – it can't go that way. We need to make a sharp turn up ahead."

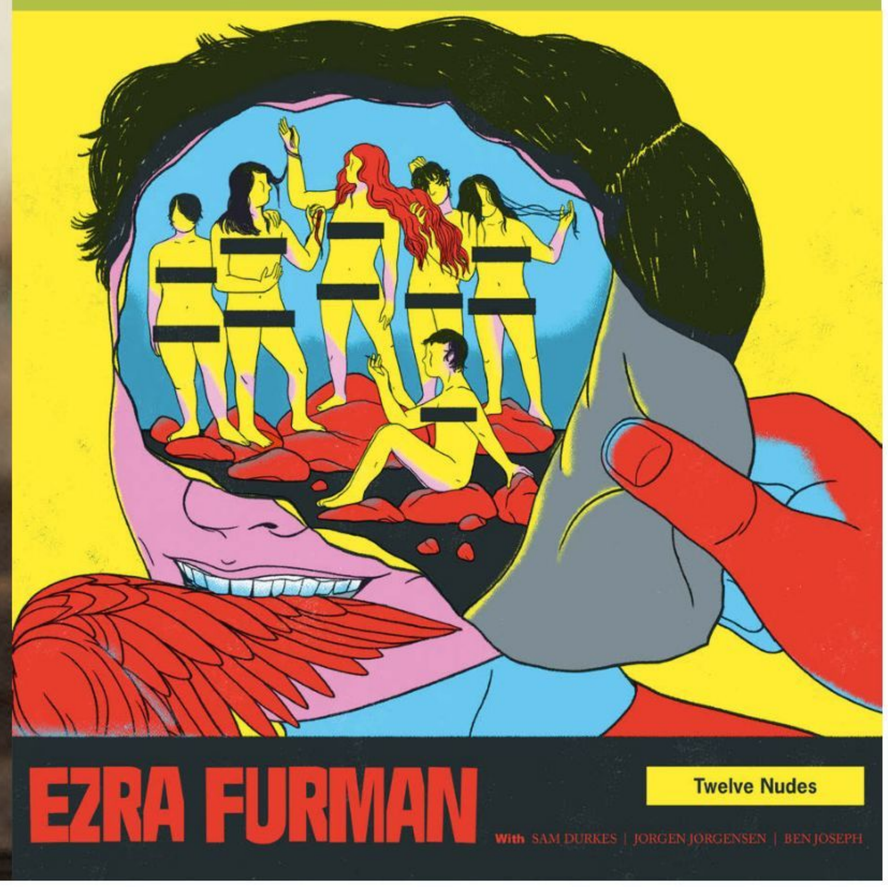
On *In America*, Furman condenses that outlook into two minutes and 11 seconds of fizzing protest music. "Put it all in a two-minute pop song, a really-mean-it-a-lot song for America," he sings. It's a tiny masterpiece that springboards from a place of fear into something open and, whisper it,

A Glossary of Influences

Where *Transangelic Exodus* took its cues from Furman's interest in postmodern literature – the work of Renata Adler and David Foster Wallace, among others – *Twelve Nudes* jumps off with inspiration from sources both within the world of music and without. It's a meshing of punk rock and poetry.

The wild, distorted guitars of *Trauma* and *Blown* are a clear nod to the late punk tearaway Jay Reatard, a pronounced influence on the LP from its rapid recording through to Furman's throat-shredding vocal delivery at several points. Live, he's also been known to cover The Misfits, but he points to Green Day as his first punk love and an enduring mile marker in his own process. "I still go back to *Insomniac* and love it," he says. "Somehow, that was so completely what it is from front to back. It is kinda perfect. It's not as pop as *Dookie*, the songs aren't as ready for the radio, but it is sort of more. I also think *Nimrod* is great, to be real with you."

Twelve Nudes takes its title from the *The Glass Essay* by the Canadian poet Anne Carson. The piece details meditations Carson had that allowed her to deal with hurt in her life. "I read a lot, and I get jealous of other artforms sometimes," Furman says. "I'll read some novel and be like, 'Is there some way I can do that with my form?' It's dangerous territory, because you could end up with something a little silly. "I think it's more that it shapes my ambitions for what a record could do. I've been reading Anne Carson for a couple of years now and she might be my favourite writer around. I read the *Glass Essay* while writing these songs. I was like, 'That's what I'm doing'. I'm having these visions that you could order, you could line them up and they're all different transmutations of out-of-control pain."



Furman's desire is to play each live show as though it was his last

hopeful. Like Joey Ramone taking Reagan to task on *Bonzo Goes To Bitburg* or Elvis Costello eviscerating Oswald Mosley power-pop style with *Less Than Zero*, the song welds its anger to a torrent of hooks. "A record is a simple thing that can have a deep impact when it's good," Furman says. "This is my job, I'm making rock 'n' roll records, you know? I just want to do the best thing rock 'n' roll records can do."

Helping *Twelve Nudes* be the best it can be is a biting, stylistically sympathetic mix from John Congleton, whose previous experience – technicolour collaborations with St. Vincent, lo-fi balladeering with Angel Olsen, the Thermals' bug-eyed garage-rock, and the expansive indie of Cymbals Eat Guitars – put him firmly in the record's gritty-yet-melodic wheelhouse. But with a friend, Trevor Brooks, engineering the sessions and the band recording themselves, Congleton's gilded ears represented an outside opinion that Furman wasn't initially sure he should seek out.

This is my job, I'm making rock 'n' roll records. I just want to do the best thing rock 'n' roll records can do

"We had no plan of who was going to mix it," he says. "We were working with Trevor and he made these really good rough mixes. We were almost like, 'Do we even need somebody to mix it better than this?' You get into your raw version of it, but I was like, 'Nah, this can be better'. We realised that Simon Raymonde knew John Congleton and we were like, 'Maybe we can get that guy, because everything he does sounds great'. I'm really glad we did, although we've still got those rough mixes and there's something to those, too."

TURNED UP TO TWELVE

This element of give and take runs throughout Furman's music. Congleton's work on *Twelve Nudes* – emphasising the record's pop chops while keeping things weird and overdriven – only highlights the poise and precision of songs that initially appear to play things fast and loose. This has long been an important element of Furman's live shows, which highlight the communal, celebratory aspect of his work while keeping things tightly coiled.

They are wild and loud, and liberally doused with full-throated singalongs, but the frayed edges must always work in tandem with a set that has been meticulously prepared. "We should experiment more live, but we can't fuck around," Furman says. "This could be our last show – it's gotta be great. I'm very demanding of what we do as a live band. I'm trying to loosen my grip a bit. I'm kind of a perfectionist, maybe to an unnecessary degree."

Twelve Nudes casts Furman's desire to play each show as if it's his last in a telling light. Once the first note is struck on stage, we can forget the world outside, but here we're forced to turn and face reality. This is an album that relies on truth and honesty, and it's one that has the listener close to its heart. But it's not a feel-good salve or exercise in fan-service. The fact that people will take these songs up as rallying cries can't be a concern for Furman when he's putting pen to paper at the very beginning – try to manufacture this sort of anger and righteous longing for change and you'll end up with the square root of nothing important.

"The thing is, I write more than I release," he says. "I'm sort of assuming when I'm writing, odds are this isn't something anyone will ever hear. It helps me not get worried about it. The poison to creativity is thinking about what people want from you. They don't know – they want something real, and if it's tailored to the audience it's poison. That's the way that it has to be."

Move Fast

Twelve Nudes is a throwback to Furman's past in more ways than one. Six years ago, he released *Day Of The Dog*, a record that was rapturously received in the UK. It set him on a path to bigger venues and considerable critical interest, but it also allowed him to set aside the rapid work-rate (three albums with his old band, the Harpoons, and one solo set in five years) that had underpinned his output to that point.

After the melodically grandiose *Perpetual Motion People* and *Transangelic Exodus*, making *Twelve Nudes* was a little like pressing rewind to a period when studio time was at a premium and it was a case of work fast or die, but with the added security blanket of hard-won self-acceptance. "The last time we did something quick like this was *Day Of The Dog*, which was when we started to get more attention after that," he says.

"We started to get a little, I don't know if nervous is right, but self-conscious that it's got to be good because now people are paying attention. Now, we've proved ourselves to ourselves. We figured out we could make good records. I also always knew I would one day make a record that knows it's in the punk genre pretty firmly, and 2018 was the time."

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How To Keep It Real

MC Taylor of Hiss Golden Messenger talks Carolina life, introspection and the romance of the road. **Jonathan Wright** listens in

GRAHAM TOLBERT

There are two reasons MC Taylor lives in Durham, North Carolina. One reason is simply that it's the place he calls home, a "small progressive town" on the Piedmont, the area between the mountains and the coast. It's the place where his children were born, where many of his friends live and where he owns a house. But as to how he first came to settle in Durham, that's bound up, as is so much in Taylor's life, with music.

"Having felt like I was so connected to the musical culture of the South when I was living in California, I realised that if I was going to get any deeper into it, if I was going to have a true and genuine understanding of it, I needed to live here," he says, "otherwise I was just going to be a spectator."

The latest evidence that Taylor, who leads the loose conglomeration of musicians that make up Hiss Golden Messenger, is steeped in the music of the South comes with new album *Terms Of Surrender*. It's a record that combines elements of different roots traditions – warm soul grooves, gospel's sense of yearning, the stark formality of folk – to create music that's somehow instantly familiar, yet where the songs oftentimes spin off into unexpected directions so subtly that you hardly realise what's happened as you're taken somewhere new.

It's a record, says Taylor, that grew out of a period of soul searching. "The time during which I was composing these songs was pretty introspective for me," he says. "There was a certain lack of clarity in my life about what I was doing, what I was supposed to be doing with my life. Working as an artist is a weird profession, especially when you have a family. I'm married, I have two kids, and so my family kind of needs a certain type of stability and routine, and that's not necessarily what the life of an artist can give. And there was just a lot of internal wrangling I was doing."

But as well as being an introspective record, its 10 tracks distilled from an initial 40 or so contenders written at home, *Surrender* is also what Taylor calls "a wandering record" laid down in different locations: in upstate New York at the Long Pond studio owned by Aaron Dessner of The National, who guests on the record (as does Jenny Lewis), Sound City in Los Angeles, and in the Haptown studio in Nashville. Recording in different locales was a way to discover "what sorts of energies different geographies brought to the music".

Yet the record never seems unfocused, in part because it sounds organic, as befits an album basically laid down over just 10 days and where "if there was any time spent fussing in the studio, it was getting the grooves right". And for all its introspection, *Terms Of Surrender* deals with universal themes. "I think everybody wakes up every day and thinks to themselves, 'What am I doing? Am I doing the right thing? Am I doing what my soul is asking for? Is my spirit being sustained in some way? And am I far enough along on my path? What is my path?'" says Taylor.

He's probably giddy fun over his morning coffee. As it happens, Taylor's conversation is punctuated with self-deprecating laughs after he's made these kinds of remarks, as if he's aware they may look a little *too* serious in print. Nonetheless, Taylor never dodges the idea his songs tackle the kinds of "universal questions" we all face. "Even though the composition felt very personal and small, I think during the recording of the record I was aware that these questions had the capability to connect with a lot of people," he says.

SCHOOL'S OUT

All of this gives the album an understated tension between introspection and looking outwards that was perhaps picked up by director DL Anderson in the video for lead single *I Need A Teacher*, which features a montage of schoolteachers who were protesting in North Carolina against cuts to public education. While Taylor says he's "not a political writer, I don't want to be," he adds: "The reason that video works, I think, is because you can see the emotion in people's faces. It's not any more complex than that. I said, 'If you're going to go make that video there, I need it to be emotional, I need it to make me cry, basically. So how are you going to step into this political scenario and make it emotional?'"

"My life of musical discovery to this day still has a whole lot to do with finding and listening to very obscure music"

Carolina Dreamin': MC Taylor relocated from his native California to be closer to the musical culture of the South

From a different angle, the next exercise in making it emotional that Taylor faces is to take the album on tour – more wandering. He finds the "transitions… the leaving home and then coming back home" tricky, but he likes being on the road, finds it "romantic" even. "When I see, for instance, footage of Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, I can't help but feel some kind of connection to that sort of circus-coming-to-town vibe," he says. "It's not the glamour of it at all, it's the spit and sawdust and face-paint aspect, the circus aspect of it that I love. It's this idea of putting on a show for people that need some kind of escape for 90 minutes or two hours."

Which isn't to say this is just about the romance of the road for its own sake, there has to be a connection with the audience. "I have to get up on stage and do a real thing," Taylor says. "It has to feel like there's something at stake. That's somehow beyond putting on a good show with no mistakes or bum notes."

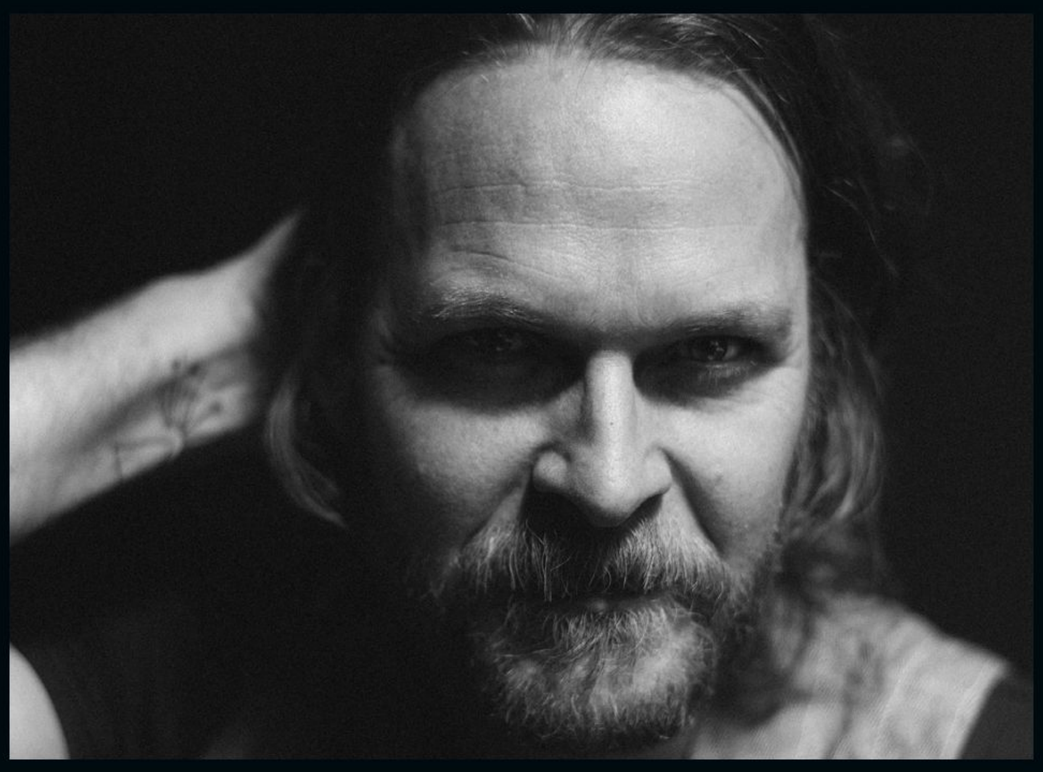
The excitement of live music is something Taylor first discovered growing up in Southern California. For all he now plays roots music, punk shaped him. "I'm always surprised that people are surprised that I started out playing punk and hardcore music, because I feel that everybody that I know, that's how everybody started," he says.

Importantly, this was music that was accessible. "I realised that, instead of going to a big concert in a stadium, I could actually go into a small room with people and see them play their music not 10 feet from where I was standing," says Taylor, "and that felt like an incredible secret to be let in on. Very early on, I realised that it's possible and powerful to have a deeply spiritual connection with music in a small place, and the music doesn't have to be something that you hear on Top 40 radio, it can be very obscure.

"My life of musical discovery to this day still has a whole lot to do with finding and listening to very obscure music. I don't think that my own music is particularly hard to listen to, but the constituent parts of my musical personality, my internal musical life, are really made up of obscurities."

From seeing punk bands, it was "a short jump" to Taylor picking up a guitar and trying to be a musician himself because there didn't seem to be anything too "mystical" about the

GRAHAM TOLBERT



Songwriting is a cathartic process for MC Taylor. His songs are wrought from personal experience

bands he was seeing. These were "people who seemed like they were just like me, same age, same awkwardness, same sort of background".

A MUSICAL ODYSSEY

Nonetheless, the language of punk, in Taylor's words – "the language of my teen years" – was ultimately limiting. So how did the journey to rootsier music come about? Were there any records or tracks that helped Taylor steer a course? "There are very important musical moments in my life that chart a certain understanding of musical depth," he says.

"So they might not be in the realm of what people think of as roots music, but for me I wouldn't be where I am without them, and that would be something like Public Enemy's *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*. I wouldn't be a musician without that record because it taught me that you have to live with certain records that you found very complicated on first listen because those were the records that were going to keep on revealing themselves to you."

From a different angle, Taylor also namechecks The Faces' Ronnie Lane. "You hear Ronnie Lane, and you hear blues, gospel, country, old-time music, vaudeville music and it's all mixed up together," he says. "That first record he made with his band Slim Chance [*Anymore For Anymore*, 1974], that's an amazing record. I love that record so much and its swinging and grooving and fun and bittersweet – it does all the things for me."

"The time during which I was composing these songs was pretty introspective for me"

You can see much of Taylor's musical odyssey since the turn of the millennium, when he led the San Francisco-based alt-folk band The Court & Spark, as an effort to do something similar. For Taylor, he began to succeed with Hiss Golden Messenger's *Bad Debt* (2010), a stripped-down collection that moved beyond disillusionment with the music industry to deal with faith, doubt, parenthood, redemption – the big stuff. Despite the DIY nature of the LP's first release, it connected. Was Taylor surprised by this?

"At first I was surprised because I had been making music for so long already with really nothing to show for it," he says, "but then I wasn't so surprised because, as opposed to whatever music I was making prior to *Bad Debt*, I found a vein of emotional honesty." The songs felt "genuine", "better than anything I had written before", and that, no coincidence, is when Taylor really began to find an audience.

Since then, the story of Hiss Golden Messenger has been a slow build. For a while, Taylor worked a day job to keep things ticking over, albeit one that reflects his particular passions. He was a folklorist "documenting different vernacular traditions… mostly music" for the state of Carolina. That love of the obscure again. "It was great, I loved that work, it was amazing work," he says. "I could have been making more money working in a fast food restaurant, but the work was wonderful."

It's what you would expect Taylor to say, the musician whose "soul knows" that creating "a catalogue of music that I know is an honest depiction of where I've been at" is an achievement in itself. But there's a caveat: "For another part of me, the ambitious part, that's not enough." You want people to hear those records? "Yeah, I want to be able to pay my band well. I want to be able to put money in the bank. I want the music to be recognised because I think it's real." He's nothing to worry about: in an understated way, Hiss Golden Messenger's music is as real as it gets. ●

MC TAYLOR
RECORD FIEND

While he loves records and has "many, many thousands of them" MC Taylor says he's "a little ambivalent" about the idea of there needing to be more physical product in the world. Nonetheless, "When I hit a new town I'm generally on the hunt for the best used record store in town."

So what's Taylor looking for in the bins? "It's got harder over the years to find things in used record stores, I think because so much stuff gets sold online. Generally speaking, the first section that I go to in any used record store is the gospel section because it seems to me that those sections haven't quite been picked totally clean. There's a lot of gospel stuff basically from the 40s through the 80s that is interesting to me."

So, which record stores would he recommend to us?

CAROLINA SOUL
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA
carolinasoul.com

"The place has an incredible used selection. In particular, they have a fantastic gospel section. Because the collections they are finding and putting into their stacks are from the south, so consequently a lot of the gospel is southern gospel. I love that place."

DOWN HOME MUSIC
EL CERRITO, CALIFORNIA
downhomemusic.com

"They really have a very deep selection of American roots music, so everything from gospel to TexMex, cajun, blues, country, all that stuff. I can get lost in those sections. As I get older, straight-up rock music is less and less interesting to me."

THE ATTIC
MILLVALE, PENNSYLVANIA
atticrecordstoreinc.com

"Someone knew that I was a record fiend and said that when you're in Millvale, make sure you go to this place. It was truly amazing, it was almost too much to handle. They had everything. I bought some reggae records there. I spent an hour there and I felt like I was just scratching the surface."

GRAHAM TOLBERT

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MUSIC BOX

MY LIFE IN VINYL

Chris Kimsey

The renowned engineer has worked in the music industry for 45 years, forging a close relationship with The Rolling Stones. He shares his highlights with **Teri Saccone**

Engineer and producer Chris Kimsey never set out to capture the sounds of the classic-rock era, yet he shaped more than 360 albums for acts including The Rolling Stones, Peter Frampton, Duran Duran, Led Zeppelin, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Ten Years After and The Psychedelic Furs. Kimsey engenders respect and camaraderie with the artists he works with, due to his expertise and genuine warmth.

When he started out, aged 17, popular music dominated the landscape, but film scores were his passion. "I wasn't interested in the music of the day, Hendrix and the like, I was into film music," he remembers. "In school, I did music for plays, played piano and timpani." The Londoner became intrigued with the fabled Olympic Studios, stopping in often and "Hassling them until they hired me". Once on board, Kimsey progressed from tea boy to tape operator. "Olympic was a fantastic training ground, as you'd have a jingle session in the morning, a film orchestral session in the afternoon, then bands at night."

Some of the young producer's earliest sessions were assisting in film soundtracks for seminal 60s films such as *Get Carter* and *The Italian Job*, working alongside Quincy Jones and Michel Legrand. "I started on orchestra sessions, then the rock thing happened," he says.

Kimsey's early rock sessions were mainly with the Stones, alongside mentor and lifelong friend Glyn Johns, and he remembers fondly how "Rock music became fascinating to me." One of the main hallmarks of Kimsey's developing sound was the way he created a live vibe, "capturing the best performance the artist is capable of. It's about creating a good atmosphere for the artist," he explains.

Despite a long association with classic rock, Kimsey also worked on reggae and world music records, and with artists including BB King, Billy Preston, Gipsy Kings and The Chieftains. Unsurprisingly, he remains an avid vinylist, owning around 6,000 albums and, at the age of 68, he's not finished with the world of music yet: "I still love it, and I want more."

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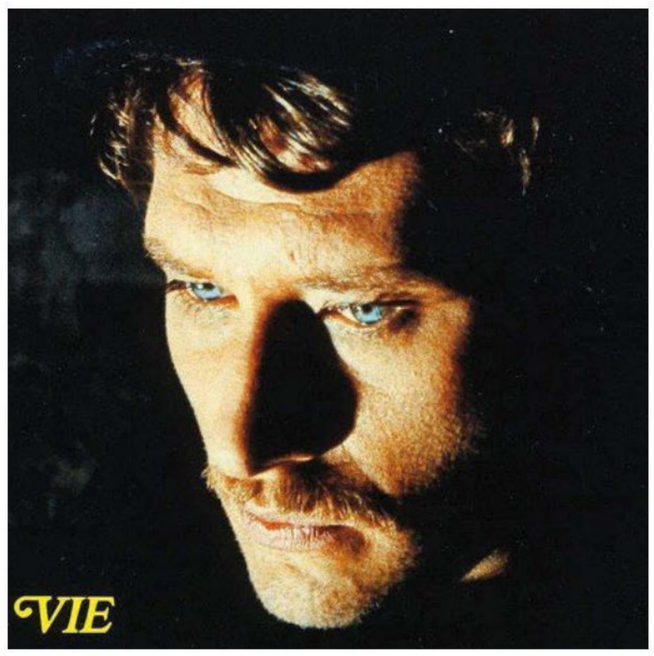
The Rolling Stones
SOME GIRLS

Rolling Stones Records
1978

"The Rolling Stones are a truly live band, so I wanted them to feel like they were playing in a club. I set them up with their gear in a semi-circle. Mick and Keith hardly ever came into the control room, they just left me to it. Those sessions in a Paris recording studio started at 9 or 10pm, then at about 1am their entourages would arrive, so it was a big party on the studio floor while I was in the control room recording, logging everything. There was tons of tape, 60-odd reels, from those sessions. Ultimately, the album had an immediacy that was perfect for them. It also taught me much about feel and groove and reminded me just what a great drummer Charlie Watts is, he's one of the finest drummers and best timekeepers ever. When we recorded the title track, it was 16 minutes long, but they wanted me to make it a four-minute song. There are not many drummers who can play perfectly in time straight through for 16 minutes, most people would be utterly terrified to do that without a click track. I edited that song down to four minutes using bits from all over the 16-minute tape, yet Charlie's time did not change one bit throughout it all. He was absolutely spot on."

Johnny Hallyday
VIE

Philips
1970



"I was still an assistant, and then on the second day of that session the Olympic engineer didn't turn up. So they were trying to figure out who could engineer, as they had the musicians coming, and his manger said, 'Well what about Kimsey?' I'd never engineered before, but I'd been learning. So I jumped in the seat and that was it. I did the session. Johnny (aka 'the French Elvis') fell in love with the sound. After that, I worked often with Johnny. I must have done maybe five albums with him, and through his sessions I met Ringo Starr, Gary Wright, Peter Frampton, Mick Jones from Foreigner and others. So from that session onward, I became a rock engineer."

"Charlie Watts is one of the finest drummers ever. Not many drummers can play perfectly in time straight through for 16 minutes"

Led Zeppelin
LED ZEPPELIN III

Atlantic
1970

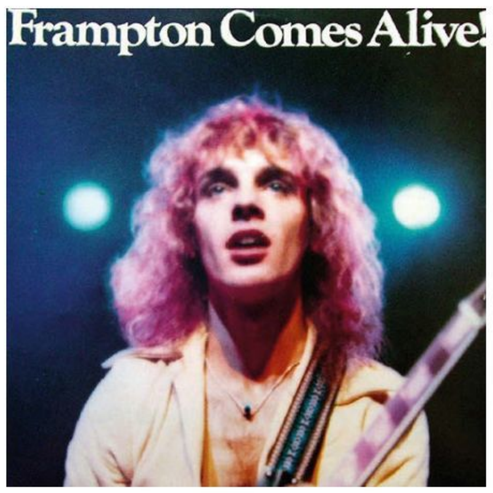
"I was an assistant engineer on this, Eddie Kramer was the engineer. We are still friends and I saw him last week. My reaction to Zeppelin was that they were very different. Glyn Johns had done their debut album, of course. But that type of music, blues with heavy rock, was still unique, interesting. And, of course, the third album was groundbreaking for them. Yet we were not really aware that we were working on something that was so important for them at the time. The Zeppelin mystique was huge, bigger than even the band itself. They are lovely and very easy to work with. We set the drums on a drum riser: Bonzo was all about touch, not hitting hard, and was a workhorse. He never came into the control room to listen to playbacks. He just played, bringing the best performances to every song. And the fact that Page was the producer and wanted to record the room sound most of all was very impressive to me, as I'm the same. Working with Page was easy. I had then and still have a lot of respect for him as a producer and artist. He knew what he wanted, no questions, very decisive in the studio. He's still supporting the Zeppelin catalogue and has not been desperate to go out on the road. He's preserving the recorded history of the band."

Jimmy Cliff
SPECIAL

Columbia
1982

"That was my first time working with Jimmy, who is a wonderful man and a dream to work with. We recorded at Channel One in Trenchtown, Kingston. I had to be smuggled into the studio covered with blankets, as no white people were allowed there back then. So I sat in the studio while Jimmy and Bunny Wailer worked. Then after two days I was invited to sit in front of the console. I had a great love of ska music from an early age and was later fascinated by how they got such a dark drum sound. I learnt fast that it's because they had no microphones. They only mic'd the snare, tom-toms and bass drums, so the cymbals would bleed through the drum mics. There is no high end to the drums, it's all mid-frequency and very dark, and I love that. Musicians tried to emulate reggae, but mistakenly put mics everywhere. So that was fantastic to learn."

Peter Frampton
FRAMPTON COMES ALIVE



A&M
1976

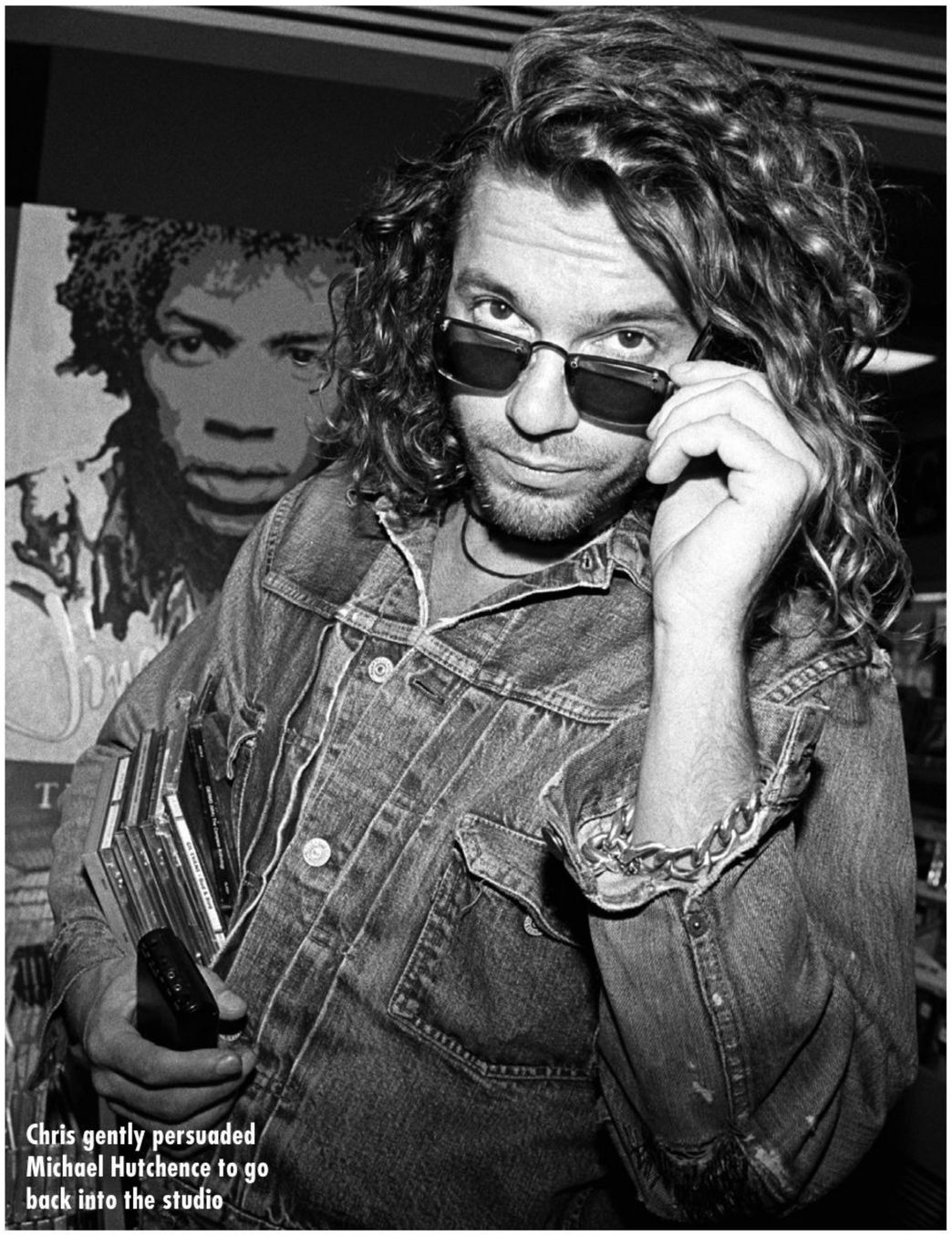
"I'd done several of Peter's albums, so we had a great friendship. The live album was recorded over two years on tour. I didn't record any of the concerts, as they were done by different engineers on the road. But when it was all recorded, Peter asked that I come to New York to mix it. I went to Electric Lady, and one of the best things about the album is the audience reactions, they're as much a part of the album as Peter. There were press rumours that we'd doubled up the audience's reactions, but that wasn't true. Those are all genuine screams and emotions. It was a phenomenon for Peter and public life became very difficult thereafter. He was a superstar."

"Peter Tosh didn't have much respect for anyone other than himself"

Peter Tosh
MAMA AFRICA

EMI
1983

"Through a mutual friend due to my work with the Stones, I was asked to produce Peter Tosh. So I jumped on a plane to Jamaica, without having met him. Peter was not a friendly guy. He was an arsehole. I loved his voice and we had a very strange relationship in the studio because he didn't have much respect for anyone other than himself, and he'd do the bare minimum work-wise. So he'd come to the studio, play three or four songs, everyone would learn it, and then he'd say, 'OK, I gotta go for some fish!', and he'd fuck off and come back in the evening to see if we'd done it. We'd have finished the track and then he would put his vocals on top. I loved his voice. People ask if he was racist. One day, I suggested he cover *Johnny B. Goode*, so I played him Chuck Berry's original version to illustrate. But he said, 'Look mon, I don't do no white man's music'. So the next day I came in with a photo of Chuck Berry [laughs]. So, ultimately, he did a great version of it, adapting the lyrics with a Jamaican style. It was great, so I enjoyed that part of working with him. Socially, not so much. But over the times I spent there recording, it was a pleasure to work with most of the Jamaican musicians."



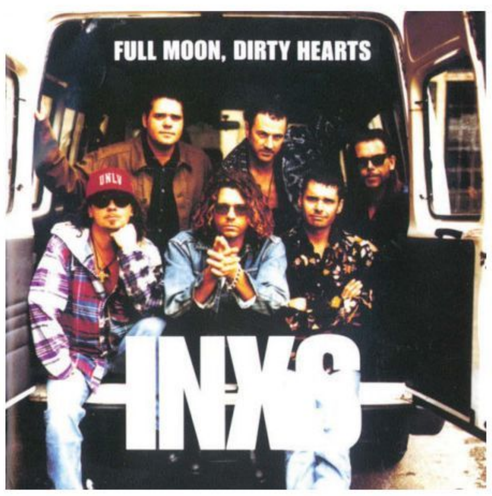
Chris gently persuaded Michael Hutchence to go back into the studio

CATHERINE MCGANN/GETTY

INXS
FULL MOON, DIRTY HEARTS

Mercury
1993

"I had met INXS in Paris when I was working on a Stones album over there. We got together, and they played me half of that album. I thought they were demos, because it sounded really pretty ropey, rough. So I said, 'It will be great when you record it properly' and they said, 'That is recorded properly'. I replied, 'Oh!' [laughs]. So they said, 'Do you think we should do this again?' We came to Olympic and we recorded.



Michael Hutchence was a lovely man, he was one of the most gracious people that I've met and worked with in my entire career. I asked him to sing on the *Symphonic Stones* album. I wanted him to do *Under My Thumb*. Michael came on board, he was absolutely thrilled to do it. Anyway, with INXS he was just so much fun to work with, very quick and intelligent, just a really nice guy. I got on really well with him, and his girlfriend was the model Helena Christensen. He was a sweet, lovely man. We did a duet with him and Chrissie Hynde, which was crazy. She arrived and we were already doing the vocal, his part, and she said, 'I'm just gonna go out to do some shopping', and she went out for several hours. She has studio stage fright, she hates being in the studio. But she did finally come back and put her vocals down."

The Rolling Stones
STEEL WHEELS

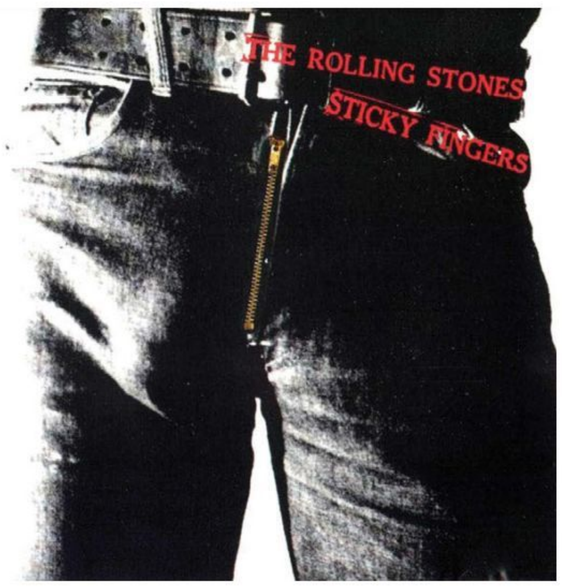
Rolling Stones Records
1989

"I was amazed by that recording, as we went to Montserrat and after making so many previous records with the Stones, as an engineer or producer this was different. The one directly prior to that was *Dirty Work*, which I declined to work on, as Mick and Keith were not getting on. When they called me for *Steel Wheels*, Mick, Keith, Charlie and I agreed that they'd all jam in a room beforehand to write the songs so the recording would not be such a long process. Upon hearing the songs, I wanted to make a lush, cinematic album, not something raw at all. I wanted it to be deep and glossy, versus raw and immediate like other albums – it was a conscious decision to make it sound different. Recording became very organised for the very first time. We'd start every day at 2pm sharp, work until dinnertime and then afterwards, head back into the studio until one in the morning. They had a great work ethic! This was 11 years after *Some Girls*, which had proved to be a lot looser in coming together."

"We'd start recording every day at 2pm sharp, work until dinnertime and then head back into the studio until 1am. They had a great work ethic!"

The Rolling Stones
MOONLIGHT MILE

Rolling Stones Records
1971



In 1971, while working on *Sticky Fingers*, one of many Stones albums he contributed to as an engineer/producer, Kimsey went back to his roots, recording a full orchestra for this track. "I finally really felt the power of an orchestral arrangement within rock music at that point. Paul Buckmaster's gorgeous orchestra arrangement blew my mind. Although I had recorded an orchestra with Del Newman for Ten Years After, it was much smaller. The arrangement on *Moonlight Mile* was the real deal."

Killing Joke
NIGHT TIME

EG Records
1985

"Recording the sessions at Hansa Studios in Berlin is one of my favourite recollections. Berlin was an oasis of culture, music and art at that time. On the first day, I was summoned out of my hotel room (still asleep at 5am) to find the band being held at gunpoint by police in the studio. They'd had a party, somebody set off a fire extinguisher and broke a console. I had to do some serious sweet-talking to get the police to leave. During late-night sessions, the band would throw open the windows overlooking the Berlin Wall and crank up the music. I had first met them in early 1984 when I recorded and produced their single *Eighties* at Olympic Studios. Their label, EG Records, asked me to work with them. Most people thought I was nuts to work with them, as they were labelled as 'crazy'. Well, crazy is genius in my book, so I did, and they became great mates. This was the song that Nirvana copied the main guitar from and called it *Come As You Are*! The friendship continued, as I asked Jaz Coleman to arrange some of the *Symphonic Music Of The Rolling Stones* LP I produced."

Marillion
MISPLACED CHILDHOOD

EMI
1985

"I found Marillion to be incredibly theatrical, obviously, live with Fish. But I liked the fact that they'd not just written 10 songs and randomly put them together. Instead, there was a theme going through it all and there's a lot of musicality in there. When we started the rehearsals, we did them in Chessington. I'd go down there, got on with everybody, and then started to realise that this was a concept album. So when it came to recording, I wanted to take them to Hansa in Berlin, as I'd done Killing Joke in there. We all loved Berlin at that time, including Marillion. The Wall was still up, and it was a pretty wild kind of city, very artsy, like Paris used to be in the 20s, and we enjoyed it a lot. It was a pleasure to make the album." ●

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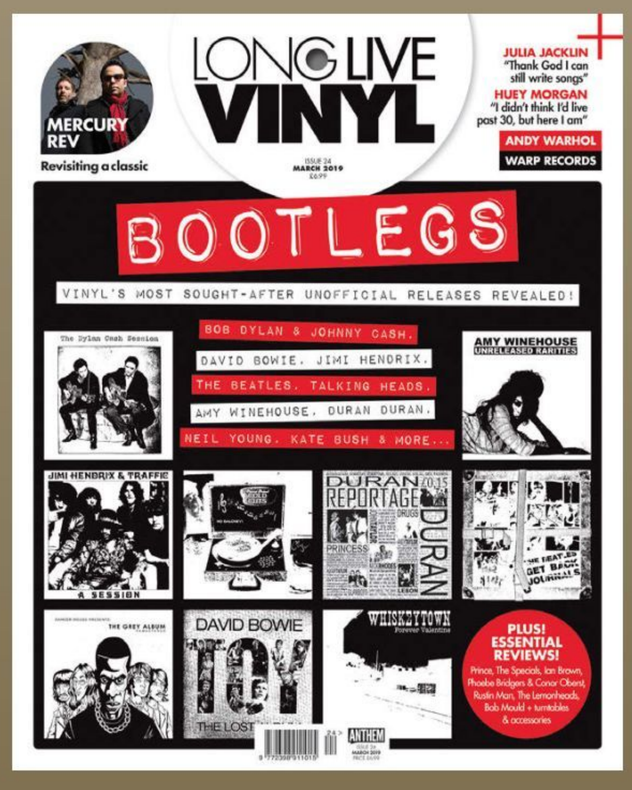

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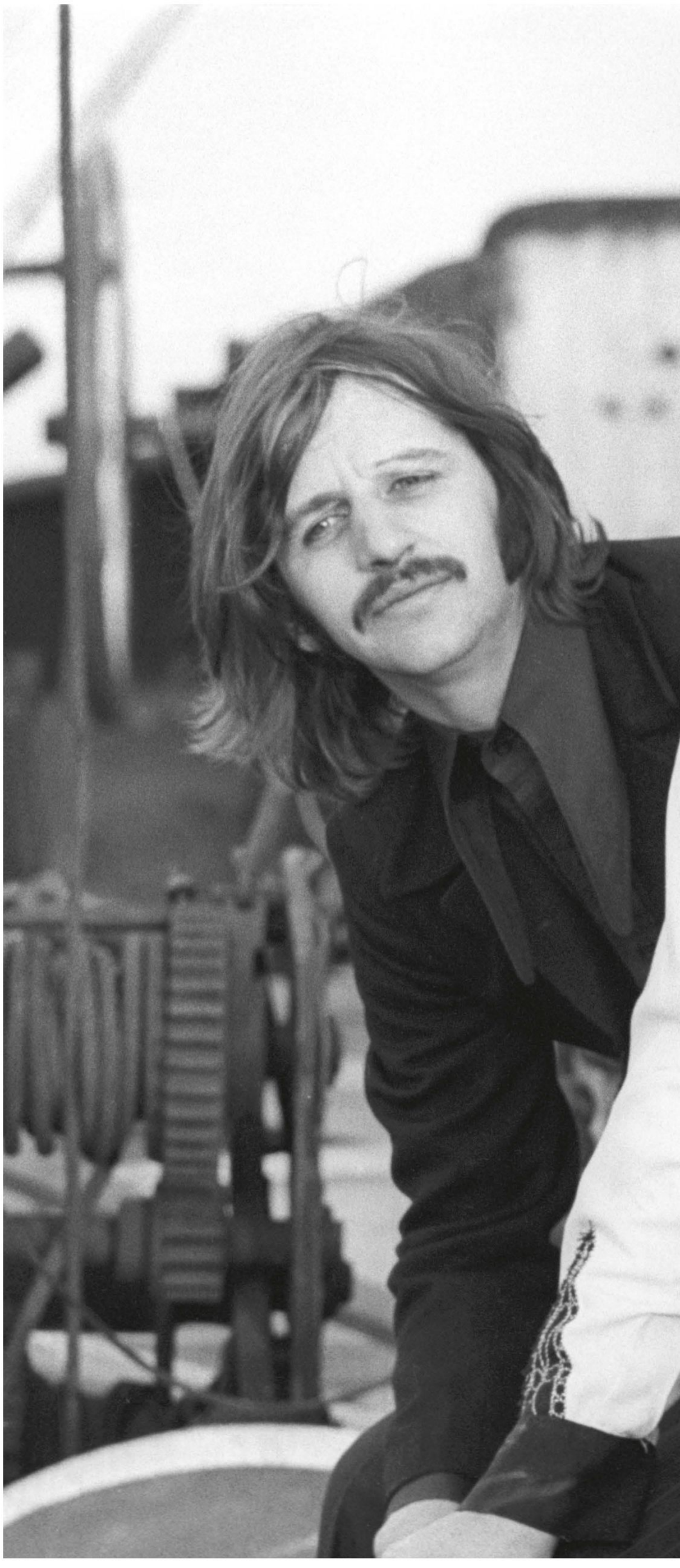
THE END

ABBEY ROAD AT 50

With George Martin back in the studio and George Harrison emerging as a major songwriting force, the last album The Beatles recorded was a fitting final testament to the band's stellar talent. **Huw Baines** revisits 1969



BRUCE MCBROOM © APPLE CORPS LTD

The *Abbey Road* 50th Anniversary Deluxe Vinyl boxset offers up 40 tracks on three 180-gram vinyl LPs. The album's new stereo mix LP is packaged in a faithfully replicated sleeve, with the two Sessions LPs paired in their own jacket, presented with a four-page insert in a lift-top box

The date is 8 August, 1969 and in the bright morning sunlight four men, wearing three pairs of shoes, walk across a zebra crossing. As a friendly bobby holds the London traffic at bay, a photographer takes six pictures from atop a ladder, searching for the perfect inverted V in his subjects' strides. It's the fifth of six that does the trick. The shot, startlingly simple but cloaking a complex truth, will become emblematic not only of the end of a band, maybe *the* band, but also the end of a decade, a movement and a dream.

The cover photo of The Beatles' *Abbey Road* is a remarkable thing. In its essential form it is nothing more than a piece of pop ephemera, but such is the group's enduring influence that it is also one of the defining images of the 20th century. John Kurlander, who was 18 when he served as assistant engineer on the album, is amazed by its longevity. "It never occurred to me that in 50 years' time people are going to be phoning me up and still talking about this," he tells *Long Live Vinyl*.

The sleeve holds such power because John, Paul, George and Ringo are walking in the same direction. In that sense, it speaks of doomed hope as much as anything. The 60s ended, literally and symbolically, in tragedy at Altamont, the counterculture eating itself as The Rolling Stones played, but the splintering of the Fab Four sounded its death knell.

No band had embodied the decade's ideals so completely, moving from rock 'n' roll upstarts through psychedelic experimentation with an attitude that, outwardly at least, was never less than right on. Give peace a chance, John and Yoko said from beneath their sheets, but peace was in short supply in the lead-up to *Abbey Road*. The album itself is a remarkable last stand by men who could barely tolerate being in the same room as one another; a monument to creativity surrounded by the mouldering ruins of a partnership that changed the world.

How did the latter-day Beatles, a dispiriting brew of egos, insecurity, anxiety and mounting money problems, manage to build something like this? The answer might be parsed from the title of Lennon's opener: *Come Together*. The Beatles made *Abbey Road* because, deep down, they still cared about The Beatles, and if this was to be their farewell, then it would not be with a whimper.

Something truly remarkable is the truncated timeframe of the band's last throes: fewer than 12 months separate the end of work on *The White Album* and the release of *Abbey Road*, and slotted between the two were the unfailingly spiky *Get Back* sessions, which would eventually become 1970's *Let It Be*.

But, if we zoom out and view The Beatles' career as a whole, that rapid pace was almost their normal. "They were an incredible phenomenon, but their popularity was fairly short-lived, 1962 or 1963 to '70," prog legend Alan Parsons, who was a 20-year-old assistant engineer on *Abbey Road*, says. "It was only seven years, but it seemed like forever to me."

DOMINO EFFECT

At this point, it's worth winding back the clock to August 1967. The death of Brian Epstein, the band's manager and a contender for the title of 'fifth Beatle', had long-lasting effects on the group. There was a domino effect that emitted from this loss that deepened existing divisions and opened up fresh ones. Notably, the Fabs' financial situation plummeted further into chaos thanks to Apple Corps, the multimedia conglomerate formed in 1968 as a tax shelter.

A voracious money pit cloaked by hippie idealism and rock star largesse, the band members soon grew tired of the endeavour (John, George and Ringo) or fried by its sapping time demands (Paul). Early in 1969, Lennon let slip to *Disc And Music Echo* that if Apple continued haemorrhaging money "we'll be broke in six months".

Then there was the appointment of the robust American businessman and music publisher Allen Klein to manage their affairs. McCartney's preference, for his future father-in-law Lee Eastman and brother-in-law John – both attorneys – to take over, was voted down three to one after Lennon and Yoko Ono drew Harrison and Starr to Klein's side, creating a wound that would fester. Lennon and McCartney also failed to acquire Northern Songs, the company responsible for publishing their music, when it was placed on the market.

Creatively, things were also in disarray at this time, the *Get Back* sessions were a demoralising run of minor inconveniences and major fallings out. They had begun with hope, that great fading currency, in plentiful supply. After enjoying a taping of *Hey Jude* for *Frost On Sunday* in September 1968, the band floated the idea of playing live again. They agreed to convene at Twickenham Studios the following January to prepare for a date, potentially at London's Roundhouse. In doing so, they would get back to basics as a rock 'n' roll quartet after the experimentation of *Sgt. Pepper's…* and *The White Album*.

Director Michael Lindsay-Hogg was invited to capture rehearsals on film, and the Fab Four fell to pieces. With Glyn Johns subbing in for producer George Martin, who was pushed to the outer as the band searched for their misplaced grit, work was often aimless and meandering, relying on bashed-out standards and rehashes from their Hamburg days. New material came in fits and starts as McCartney's workaholic tendencies grated on his bandmates. Lennon was strung out on heroin and hated being filmed, while Harrison bristled at the presence of Yoko and his ongoing sidelining as a songwriter.

As Ringo had done during work on *The White Album*, objecting to McCartney's ▶

> "THE THREE SONGWRITING BEATLES WOULD LITERALLY COME IN JUST TO DO THEIR OWN THINGS" **ALAN PARSONS**

New horizons: George, John, Ringo and Paul at Tittenhurst Park, 22 August, 1969

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JUST KIDS

John Kurlander was closer to his O-Levels than he was to being able to buy a round in a pub when he began working at Abbey Road, having initially snagged a job at the studio thanks to a kind word from his English master, who was a neighbour of studio legend Gus Cook. "I lived at home locally, just one block from the studio," he says. "I went to school about a quarter of a mile from there. I grew up with all that through the 60s. To go to school, I had to walk past the studios twice a day."

Aged 17, he joined the fray on *The Ballad Of John And Yoko* at the behest of George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick. It was his first major project; he progressed quickly through the ranks, collaborating with Badfinger and Mary Hopkin, among others, and later went into film, notably winning Grammys for his efforts on Peter Jackson's *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy.

If Alan Parsons was older than Kurlander when he contributed to *Abbey Road*, then he was far from the prog sage we know now. He had just turned 20 when he began helping out with The Beatles, after winning a transfer to the studio from a different department at EMI. "I was pretty young, pretty green," he says. Initially, he was parachuted in to the troubled *Get Back* sessions, crucially arriving in time for the rooftop concert.

Famously, Parsons would also engineer Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* at Abbey Road several years later, before launching his solo voyage with The Alan Parsons Project. "I don't claim any creative input to The Beatles, but certainly Pink Floyd I do claim some creative input," he says. "I'm very thankful, very proud, and I think I'm incredibly lucky to have been in the right place at the right time to work with those two artists."

"THE FOCUS WAS ON CREATING NEW SOUNDS IN DIFFERENT WAYS. IT WAS ALWAYS 'WHAT CAN WE INVENT?'"

JOHN KURLANDER

coaching of his playing on *Back In The U.S.S.R.*, George quit the band for a short time, and initially found little sympathy as Lennon talked of moving on with another guitarist. Harrison's return came with conditions: Twickenham was out, Apple's new basement studio was in, and the live show was off. Attention turned away from playing live and back to making a record.

One further snag was encountered when Magic Alex, an inventor hanger-on at Apple, was revealed to have failed miserably in building the basement studio. Martin, and an EMI crew including a young Parsons, stepped up to help with equipment and expertise, and The Beatles entered a feverish period of work. With Billy Preston and his Fender Rhodes ingeniously drafted in, they rattled through new songs including *Get Back*, *Let It Be*, *Dig It*, *Maggie Mae* and *For You Blue*. The ship was almost upright, but Lindsay-Hogg required a capper for his documentary, the now iconic rooftop concert at Apple Corps.

Here, John clad in Yoko's fur coat, McCartney grinning at his bandmates as he plucks his violin bass, the innate chemistry of The Beatles is all too evident. They aren't really friends at this point, they're barely colleagues, but while in the midst of playing together they're able to shrug off that baggage. There is still magic there, and this shorthand would be vital in creating *Abbey Road*. "The rooftop session was the ultimate live album performance," Parsons says.

PROBLEM CHILD

Get Back would continue to be a problem child, going through multiple mixes before ending up on the shelf while The Beatles' financial troubles reached fever pitch. The Klein-Eastman battle, and John's cat-out-of-the-bag moment in revealing their money woes, were not the sort of environment from which Martin expected a call asking if he would produce a new Beatles LP, but that's what happened. "Only if you let me produce it the way we used to," was his response. "We do want to do that," McCartney replied. Martin later recalled: "And I said, 'John included?' and he said, 'Yes, honestly'."

The bridge linking this troubled time to *Abbey Road* is *The Ballad Of John And Yoko*, which was cut on 14 April, 1969 at Abbey Road's Studio 3. By this point, they'd even convinced engineer Geoff Emerick, who'd quit during tense work on *The White Album*, to return.

"In order to get Geoff and George on board, I think they said, 'We will try and be nice'," Kurlander says. "[I'd asked] 'What's it like?' [and was told] 'You'll find out what it's like'. That was talking to the people who'd worked on *The White Album*, they didn't want to work on the next one. It was a lot easier, a lot friendlier, than I'd been led to believe."

On *The Ballad Of John And Yoko*, everything was recorded by Lennon and McCartney, with Starr away working on a film, *The Magic Christian*, and Harrison travelling in the US. With a great song to get their teeth into, the old friends kicked into gear. "The whole thing was done in one afternoon: recorded, overdubs, mixed, everything," Kurlander recalls.

Prior to the main block of recording, the band also turned their attention to Harrison's *Old Brown Shoe* and the sublime *Something*, McCartney's *Oh! Darling*, Starr's *Octopus's Garden* and Lennon's *I Want You (She's So Heavy)*, which had begun life as a recording with Johns at London's Trident Studios in February. In April, Lennon and McCartney attacked its ending with waves of visceral guitars, not that Kurlander, who helped engineer the session, had time to notice.

"You're running tape, which could be precarious or dangerous because you could always have an accident, they were on open spools," he remembers. "So there's the pressure of 'Don't screw up on these recordings, they are really important'. You just concentrate on doing your job. There's the possibility of punching in and wiping something, there's no undo button, just the four most important musicians in the world who lost a performance."

Abbey Road is perhaps most widely renowned for its closing medley, a feat as fascinating from a technical standpoint as it is from a songwriting perspective. That element entered the conversation relatively early, echoing recent efforts by The Who, among others. Several of its components dated back to *The White Album*, but the desire to create a conceptual piece of their own was the key driver in Lennon and McCartney's songwriting efforts prior to entering Abbey Road for a two-month block, booked between the beginning of July and the end of August.

Lennon, though, would have to wait to get involved. On 1 July, he, Yoko, his son Julian, and Yoko's daughter Kyoko, were involved in a serious car accident while holidaying in Scotland; their hospitalisation prevented John from attending initial sessions for medley pieces *Her Majesty*, *Golden Slumbers* and *Carry That Weight*, plus Harrison's second masterful contribution, *Here Comes The Sun*.

When they finally arrived, Yoko was placed in a bed in the studio with a microphone hanging overhead so she could talk to Lennon. If the 'blame Yoko' narrative's long tail is partly an example of the longer tail sported by societal misogyny and xenophobia, this remained a test of the fractious band's resolve. They overcame it remarkably well.

Kurlander, recalling an incident when Yoko's taking of a biscuit from a pack belonging to Harrison sparked a brief snafu, admits: "That story dissipated very quickly. It wasn't a huge row. I don't remember

The Beatles' last ever photo shoot was at John's country pile in Ascot

anything that was a really big deal. It was just niggly things sometimes."

Recording became a sprawl as The Beatles commandeered not only Studio 2, but also Studios 1 and 3. When they weren't recording the LP's base tracks, as they continued to do with *Come Together* and medley considerations *Sun King*, *Mean Mr. Mustard* and *The End*, often they worked separately, a practice that had begun on *The White Album*. Kurlander describes multiple engineering crews operating "like tag teams". "It was almost like they were making four solo albums," he adds. "So why don't we double up the resources?"

Parsons, too, remembers assisting for the most part with individual Beatles. "They avoided any potential confrontation by not working together," he says. "As soon as the tracks were done, they'd work on their own. It was the fine-tuning, vocals, solos, and in the case of *Maxwell's Silver Hammer*, Ringo adding the anvil. The three songwriting Beatles would literally come in just to do their own things. Ringo would usually show up at the beginning of the day and be politely dismissed: 'Thanks for coming in Ringo, but we don't need you'.

"Paul came in at two o'clock for several days to sing *Oh! Darling*. He was trying to get that gruffness in his voice, I remember him saying that when he was out performing *Kansas City* every night with The Beatles the voice was already there. But he had to tune into singing *Oh! Darling*, and it's an incredible performance that he ended up with. He was just doing it once, twice every day until he was happy."

UNCHARTED WATERS

While they worked, The Beatles pushed the equipment and crew at Abbey Road into uncharted waters. The studio was now in possession of an eight-track, which had finally been approved for use by the chief technical engineer. The tiered harmonies of Lennon's *Because* are a notable beneficiary, while Kurlander also points to a new mixing board, the desire to understand a Moog synthesizer and the band's overarching attitude as vital to the collective mood of experimentation.

"There's this new EMI desk with more inputs and more tracks and more channels," he says. "It was solid state instead of valve, which was a major difference to the sound. Nowadays, everybody is trying to use older gear, what was going on at the time was the complete opposite. The focus was on creating new sounds in different ways. At no point would anybody say, 'Could we get that guitar sound that we did on *Revolver*?' It was always, 'What can we invent?'"

MASTERMIND

Assembling the *Abbey Road* reissue, which runs to a monster 40 tracks, was a labour of love for Giles Martin and Sam Okell, the studios' senior engineer and a multiple Grammy winner. But where do you start to investigate one of the most famous musical works of all time? Well, we asked Okell just that.

"It's impossible not to see The Beatles' *Abbey Road* as a major, probably *the* major event in the studios' long history," he says. "The fact the studios were renamed from EMI Studios to Abbey Road Studios, and the thousands of tourists who mimic and recreate that famous album cover every year, prove the lasting resonance and impact this record still has with people around the world.

"I don't think Giles and I set out with any given mission beyond: 'Can we improve the listening experience for the contemporary ear?' *Abbey Road* is a great, and fairly modern-sounding, record. It was conceived as a 'stereo' record, really a first in The Beatles' canon. The vocals are mainly central and there is far less of the hard panning, rhythm hard left, etc, that you hear in earlier albums. Also, the album was recorded on eight-track, so we weren't able to 'unpick' earlier generations of tape bounces as we have done with *Sgt. Pepper*, so we had fewer separate elements to manipulate.

"Given all this, we wondered if there were improvements we could make. But after a few test mixes we were confident that subtle changes could still bring out hidden details. We were able to open up certain sounds by 'reamping', which involves playing the sounds off a tape and re-recording them in the original acoustics, for instance, Studio 2 or Studio 1, where most of the orchestra elements were recorded, with multi-microphone arrays. In this way, you can add a spaciousness and stereo width to sounds that were previously mono sources."

All of these roads were winding their way to the medley: eight songs that would preserve The Beatles' songwriting genius in amber. Kurlander had a vital role to play in its creation. On 30 July, Martin and the band assembled to figure out a rough mix and running order for the sequence, landing on *You Never Give Me Your Money/ Sun King/ Mean Mr Mustard/ Her Majesty/ Polythene Pam/ She Came In Through The Bathroom Window/ Golden Slumbers/ Carry That Weight/ The End*.

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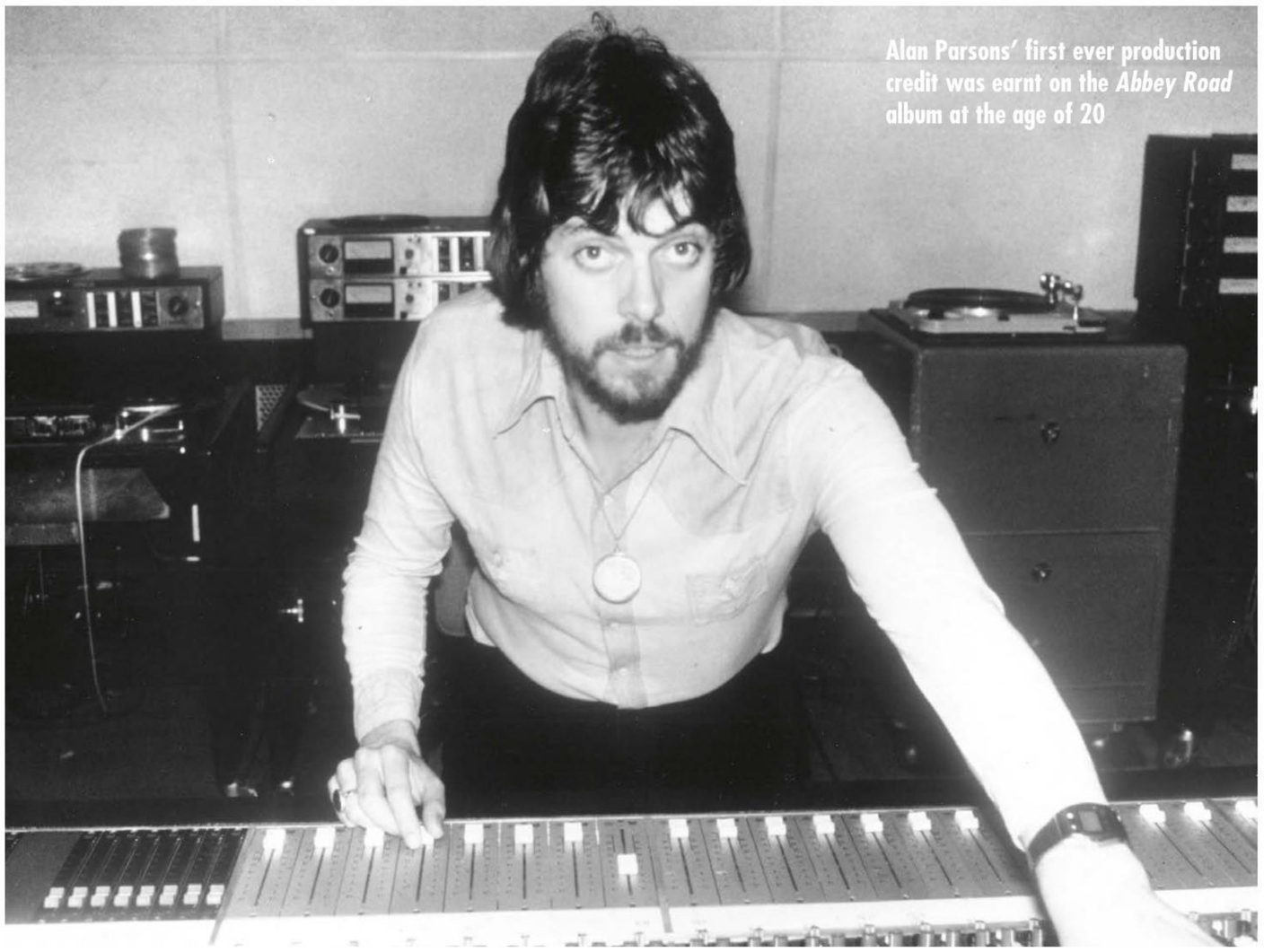


Alan Parsons' first ever production credit was earnt on the *Abbey Road* album at the age of 20

As they worked, McCartney's gut told him that *Her Majesty* was gumming up the flow. He told Kurlander to axe it. "It was two or three in the morning," Kurlander adds. "And the short bit of tape was on the floor. There were two ways to dispose of it. The long way was to put it back in the box where it came from, as if I hadn't cut it.

"The quicker way was to tag it on at the end, which was a legit thing. There was an administrative difference between a work tape and the master, once something had gone in a master tape, if you removed it the procedure was to stick it at the end with a note. So I thought, 'That's the quicker way to do it. It's late and everyone's tired. Let's just go home.'"

On the finished album, *Her Majesty* crashes into the world off a misplaced chord some 20 seconds following the conclusion of *The End*, and Kurlander's addition to this loose edit is the reason it does so. "Mal Evans, who was their roadie, took it to Apple," he says. "The next morning, Malcolm Davies, who was the mastering engineer, cut a reference lacquer. And he did exactly the same as me, he played it safe.

"When this lacquer came back, everyone heard this grand ending. No one else had heard the whole thing put together before. It had the same effect on everybody, George and Geoff, me and The Beatles. And then crashing in [comes *Her Majesty*] like a huge surprise. I thought that Malcolm would have cut it, he shares 50% of the blame or credit."

Given the acrimonious fallout and break-up that followed *Abbey Road*, it's perhaps apt that the final seconds of The Beatles' final work as a functioning group should wrong-foot the listener. *The End*'s majestic guitar duel between John, Paul and George, three kids playing for fun again, and McCartney's "And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make" summation would have been too perfect. As it is, 50 years on *Abbey Road* remains a wildly ambitious, flawed, thrilling record made by a wildly ambitious, flawed, thrilling band.

The new reissue has to reckon with that legacy while providing fresh insight for fans, and it does so handsomely. It pulls together a raft of rarities alongside mixes from the eight-track tapes by Giles Martin, son of George, and engineer Sam Okell.

It is remarkable to delve into it and hear the playfulness in Lennon's voice as he deals with a noise complaint during work on *I Want You (She's So Heavy)* at Trident, the giggles that accompany a take on *Octopus's Garden* when Ringo loses his place, and Harrison's faltering early vocal on *Something*. Everything feels genial and open-ended, as though The Beatles are allowing themselves time to muck about with the nuts and bolts of pop music before building something new.

"What I've learned from listening to many takes of Beatles songs is that most of the time there isn't a masterplan," Okell says. "Yes, they mainly went into the studio with great songs, but the routine and working out of parts in the studio slowly came about as a dialogue between the group and George Martin. The fundamental ethos of not wanting to repeat themselves, or stick to a winning formula, which allowed creative freedom and the opportunity to experiment."

At any given moment on any given day, someone might well be doing just as Iain Macmillan did on that August morning, taking a photo at a zebra crossing. That influence is the prize afforded The Beatles by the adventurous spirit Okell describes. *Abbey Road* is more than just an album, it crystallises the deeply human belief that anything might be possible, but also that things don't always work out the way we want them to. ●

"WHAT I'VE LEARNED LISTENING TO MANY TAKES OF BEATLES SONGS IS MOST OF THE TIME THERE IS NO MASTERPLAN" **SAM OKELL**

BY GEORGE

After the *Get Back* debacle, *Abbey Road* was a chance for The Beatles to rekindle one of their formative relationships. George Martin is another to have a claim to the title of 'fifth Beatle' and his work on the LP is a quiet wonder. He enjoyed pushing the group towards the quasi-classical movements of the medley, while his orchestral arrangements add a sweeping, ornate sensibility to a cut such as *Something*, which already had the minerals of a classic pop song.

"I have the utmost respect for The Beatles as a band that used the studio to its full potential, George Martin as a superlative producer and Geoff Emerick as an amazing engineer," Sam Okell says.

But Martin also had to keep things in check. *Get Back* hadn't been a failure in terms of the songs that emerged from the sessions, but it had almost broken the band into four jagged pieces. "He was always respectful of the band's opinions and input, but he had his own input as well," Alan Parsons says. "I think he was correctly referred to as the 'fifth Beatle', he really did make valid contributions to the music.

"And he always managed to find a way through what John Lennon was looking for. It's well documented that *Strawberry Fields* was an incredible feat of production that George worked very hard to achieve. I regard George Martin as being the ultimate diplomat, always respecting the band, and the band respected him. It was a perfect relationship."

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

HOW TO BUY

Abbey Road

The Beatles' last great album is highly collectable, with Decca contract pressings sporting yellow and black Parlophone labels fetching as much as £5,000. **John Pickford** explains

Collecting UK pressings of *Abbey Road* is a relatively straightforward business when compared to other Beatles albums. This was the band's first album to be released in stereo only. By late 1969, most LPs were stereo-only releases and many of those that did appear in mono, The Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed* for example, were merely a fold-down of the stereo master tape, rather than a dedicated mono mix.

All of the original *Abbey Road* covers were manufactured by Garrod & Lofthouse and feature the internal flaps rather than the flip-back design found on original copies of The Beatles' earlier releases. The first covers that were printed showed the green Apple logo misaligned with the rear cover text, appearing offset to the left. Later covers shifted the Apple logo over to the right, in alignment with the tracklisting and credits.

All copies pressed up to the end of 1970 have the Side 1 label in a darker shade of green than later 1970s and 1980s pressings, though the exact shade varies slightly. The first pressing does not list *Her Majesty* after *The End* on the Side 2 label; these copies usually appear in the misaligned Apple cover. The omission was quickly rectified, however, so Mint/archive copies with no *Her Majesty* label credit in a misaligned Apple cover have sold for sums exceeding £500.

Standard copies issued in 1969 and 1970 with dark green labels, correctly aligned Apple logo and *Her Majesty* label credit, sell for around £100 when in near-Mint condition. Both of these early pressings came with either a plain black or white inner sleeve.

1970s pressings with the lighter green Apple label command prices of around £40, while 1980s pressings featuring a barcode on the rear cover fetch around £20. In 1973, copies were manufactured for the UK market by Pathe Marconi in France. Some copies include a credit for EMI after the Pathe Marconi credit and a rear cover sticker stating 'Made In France'. Either of the French-pressed copies should cost no more than a 1970s British pressing.

At the time of the album's original release in 1969, EMI contracted with Decca to produce copies with Parlophone labels for export to countries where the Apple label was not recognised.

The first of these Decca contract pressings has the yellow and black Parlophone label, while the second has the black and silver Parlophone label. Both versions omit *Her Majesty* from the label and are housed in the misaligned Apple cover. Pristine copies with the black and yellow label have sold for £5,000, though £1,000-£2,000 is closer to the going rate. A black and silver labelled copy will cost £500-£700. Another UK-pressed export version appeared on green vinyl in 1978 and sells for £100, while a picture disc edition available in the UK as an import around the same time fetches a similar price.

The previous remaster before this year's 50th anniversary edition (released in 2012) usually retails for £24.99. ●

Classic Album

R.E.M.

MONSTER

For 1994's *Monster,* the band put away the considered beauty of their previous two albums and opted for the rough-hewn and loud, as Peter Buck's distorted guitar traded blows with Michael Stipe's laconic vocals. **Huw Baines** explores R.E.M.'s outlying ninth studio album

MONSTER
R.E.M.
CLASSIC ALBUM 63 MONSTER

The heavy, heavy *Monster* sound: (L-R) Mike Mills, Michael Stipe, Peter Buck, Bill Berry

MICHEL LINSSEN/REDFERNS/GETTY

Whenever you want to know a band, to really understand their motivations, it's not a bad idea to look at the outliers in their back catalogue rather than the smash hits. How did they find the going after making a sharp left off the pristine asphalt of the highway?

But what of a group like R.E.M., whose existence as a creative force was always defined by reinvention and a state of musical flux? Leaf through their work from the early 1980s through to the turn of the 90s and you'll find that each of their records served as an outlier for a time, until the next one came along to take its place.

Over the course of a decade, the band evolved from penning the college-rock blueprint on *Murmur* to crafting the radio-dominating chamber pop of *Out of Time* and the flawlessly melodic gothic weirdness of *Automatic For The People*. At each turn, the expectations of fans and critics alike were made to look foolish and shortsighted. But with *Monster* they took things to a logical extreme.

Released in September 1994 by Warner Brothers, R.E.M.'s ninth studio album stands as an outlier among outliers. Rough-hewn and loud where their commercial tent poles were considered and beautiful, it's the sound of a band at the peak of their powers biting back with everything they have. But, unusually given their cultural and commercial clout, those teeth marks faded quickly.

Early signs suggested that they'd done it again. *Monster* joined *Out Of Time* as R.E.M.'s second No. 1 album in the US and still stands as their only release to debut at the summit, shifting 344,000 copies in its first week. It remains one of their top three highest-selling LPs on home soil, but at some point listeners stopped popping it from the jewel case.

A lot of people, including one *PopMatters* journalist who spent seven years attempting to offload his CD copy at used record stores that already had multiple units in stock, came to view its vibrant orange sleeve as a bargain-bin mainstay. Today, vinyl copies fetch an average of £60 on Discogs. Unlike its predecessors, it remained steadfastly an outlier: its serrated edges and equally sharp tongue amounted to a difficult, emotionally complex experience that didn't offer any easy pop sugar. Its quality as a comfortable record to revisit was trumped by its creative mission statement.

"I'm aware that a lot of fans dropped off after we released it," Michael Stipe told *Newsweek* in 2009. "Many of them were casual fans who just wanted *Automatic For The People* 2, 3, 4, and so on. That's a bore for us. I abhor stasis and repetition."

Monster is an unrefined snapshot of a time and place in R.E.M.'s career, and it had to live or die in that reality. Given

Southern dandy: Michael Stipe wasn't going to let the band repeat themselves

what was happening to them as they stepped up to the plate, balancing a creative hot streak with levels of expectation and fame beyond their teenage dreams, it couldn't have turned out any other way. But on a primal level, its distorted power also spoke to Stipe's earliest creative mores in a manner that his music hadn't to that point.

BREAKING ROCK'S PROTOCOL

As a teenager, pushed to the fringes by the hermetically sealed rock scene of the 70s, Stipe's world blew open with the advent of punk. While living in St. Louis, he glommed eight-track tapes by The Velvet Underground, New York Dolls and Patti Smith from the discount section at a hardware store. "I'd found something that was dirty and exciting and sexy and smart," he told *The Observer* in 1989. *Monster* was nothing if not dirty and exciting and sexy and smart.

It took some getting to that point, though. In the autumn of 1993, when R.E.M. began work on the record, the band's four members were already getting a little twitchy at the wheel. They'd just released the two most successful albums of their career, and stuck to their guns after breaking rock protocol by not touring either of them.

"I just don't really feel that R.E.M. have to have any rules or boundaries, and not because we've made a lot of

"I'd found something that was dirty, exciting, sexy and smart"
MICHAEL STIPE

CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

The songs

CORE PERSONNEL
Michael Stipe Vocals
Peter Buck Guitar, organ
Mike Mills Bass, piano, organ, guitar, backing vocals
Bill Berry Drums, bass, backing vocals

MAIN PRODUCTION CREDITS
Scott Litt & R.E.M.

RECORDED
October 1993 to May 1994
Ocean Way Recording, Los Angeles
Crossover Soundstage, Atlanta
Criteria Recording Studios, Miami
Kingsway Studio, New Orleans

RELEASED
27 September, 1994
Warner Bros.

1 What's The Frequency, Kenneth?

Doubling as the lead single, *What's The Frequency, Kenneth?* introduced one of Buck's biggest *Monster* riffs – a college-rock *Baba O'Riley* – and a Stipe polemic about the media being left grasping at thin air by Generation X. Its title derives from an attack on veteran newscaster Dan Rather in New York (his assailant shouted "Kenneth, what's the frequency?"). Rather later performed the song with R.E.M. during a soundcheck at Madison Square Garden as part of an appearance on *The Late Show With David Letterman*.

2 Crush With Eyeliner

Released as the LP's fourth single, *Crush With Eyeliner* leaned hard into the band's glam-rock influences. Powered by Buck's tremolo-heavy riffage, the song tumbles into an ultra-cool chorus that mainlines what Berry called "that snotty boy-sexy thing" in *Rolling Stone*. Stipe again plays with ideas of identity and self-creation, throwing in asides about Frankenstein alongside searching questions that might be messing with us: "How can I convince her (faker) that I'm invented, too?"

3 King Of Comedy

One of several songs that Stipe singled out as something he wished he "could've reworked or discarded" from *Monster*, this oddball rocker stands in defiance of that self-criticism as one of the record's most incisive lyrics. Writing in character, Stipe turns in an often vicious takedown of celebrity inspired by Martin Scorsese's fame-obsessed movie satire of the same name. He stares down our expectations of him, deliberately putting things out there in another's voice that he knows we'll eagerly devour, like the monotone non-reveal "I'm straight, I'm queer, I'm bi."

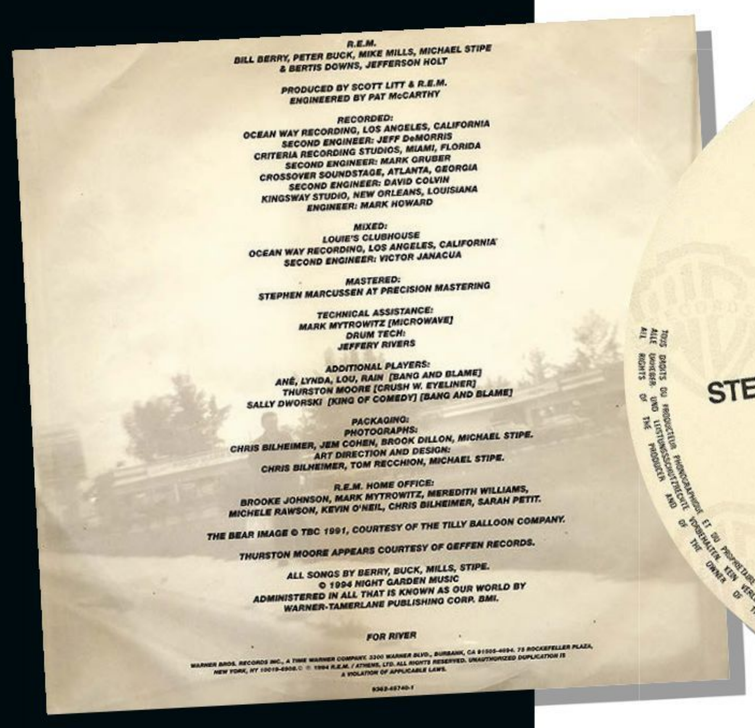
The songs
CONTINUED

4 I Don't Sleep, I Dream
Shot through with a stabbing organ, a patient performance by Berry and melodic motifs from Buck's guitar and Mills on piano, *I Don't Sleep, I Dream* skates into a circus-mirror reflection of sex and desire. Stipe's vocal, lit up by the chorus's desperate falsetto, brings a pop sensibility to words that alternately drip with self-loathing and a sort of plea for intimacy. He murmurs: "Are you coming to ease my headache? Do you give good head? Am I good in bed?"

5 Star 69
Buck's slashing riffs here are almost anti-jangle. Structurally, *Star 69* isn't a million miles away from a song like *Begin The Begin*, from *Lifes Rich Pageant*, but its performance is about as feral as R.E.M. get. The title is an allusion to the last-call return telephone service, which provides the number of the most recent person to dial yours. Stipe takes it (no doubt with a sly wink to the accompanying innuendo) to a paranoid extreme, his voice doubling back and echoing over itself before settling on a repetition of the line, "I know you called, I know you called…"

6 Strange Currencies
To close Side One, R.E.M. settled on one of their most majestic, and underrated, ballads. Stipe has never shied away from his love for one of music's most widely dismissed modes of expression — his affection for Nazareth's *Love Hurts* is documented – and as a group they were never afraid of creating something beautiful. But *Strange Currencies* is a *Monster* ballad. Buck's grimy descending chords add ballast to the chorus and its lyrics are possessive, insecure, even unromantic after a time. "These words, 'You will be mine,'" Stipe sings in the chorus, adding after a breath: "All the time".

7 Tongue
Written from a female perspective, and delivered in a halting falsetto by Stipe, *Tongue* was for a time thought to be "all about cunnilingus". "It's not 'all about' anything, someone probably cornered me with that question. There are definite sexual overtures in the lyric," he later told *Newsweek*. There is an arch, knowing sort of sadness to the song, which finds Buck roughing up a *Nightswimming*-adjacent piano line with a stack of distorted solo notes. "Call my name, here I come," Stipe intones. "Your last ditch lay, will I never learn?"



The Monster tour was the group's first outing in six years

money," guitarist Peter Buck said in an interview with *Rolling Stone* the following year.

"It's more important to do what we feel like. Once you admit that there are rules, then you've lost. And one of those rules is that you tour to promote your record. Well, fuck that, none of us felt we had to. Just coincidentally, we then sold 10 million records, which sends us a really weird message, like 'Stay home, please'."

The new record, though, would be accompanied by a real return to the road, for the first time since a 13 November, 1989 benefit at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, where they played *Murmur* and *Green* back to back. And it would be a muscular, live-ready collection. Before that could happen, though, the vacuum left by their absence from concert halls the world over had to be filled with not-so-idle chatter.

Rumours about Stipe's health began to circulate. Whispers that he was HIV positive or living with Aids, fuelled in part by the spectre of death that dogged the lyric sheet of *Automatic For The People*, made their way from bars to the music press. Stipe's response was to clear up concerns and, prior to the arrival of *Monster*, come out as queer. In doing so, he pushed back against the idea of binaries, positing sexuality as "a much more slippery thing than that" and opening a path into his new music's complex web of desires.

"I said simply that I had enjoyed sex with men and women my entire adult life," he wrote in *The Guardian* in 2009. "It was a simple fact, and I'm happy

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC/GETTY

I announced it. Not many public figures had stepped forward at this point to speak their truth. I was happy to stand beside those who had. What I had thought was fairly obvious the entire time I had been a public figure was now on record."

Sex – exciting, dangerous, liberating, frightening, obsessive – became one of Stipe's major lyrical concerns for *Monster*, and elsewhere his writing encompassed similarly elemental concerns. Through a series of cloaked character pieces, he offered a withering view of fame and persona and, much as he wanted to avoid it, he also turned to confront death again.

Monster was dedicated to Stipe's close friend River Phoenix, who died of a drug overdose in October 1993 at the age of 23. R.E.M. had begun work on the record weeks earlier, and the couple of songs Stipe had penned up to that point were the last he wrote for five months as grief settled on his chest. "I was not about to write another record about death and loss," he told *Newsweek*.

Then, in April of the following year, Kurt Cobain left the scene. "At that point, I just threw my hands up and wrote *Let Me In*," Stipe added. The song is a plea to Cobain, a frantic shout into the void to try to pull a friend out. "That was me on the phone to him, desperately trying to get him out of the frame of mind he was in."

In the months prior to his death, the Nirvana frontman had been talking to Stipe about collaborating – sketching out ideas to take his band along a more acoustic path. In another time, R.E.M. and Nirvana might have traded places for a while. "The truth of the matter is, we really didn't know each other that well," Stipe told *Rolling Stone*. "It was more of a mutual respect. He was very publicly an R.E.M. fan, which I think is incredibly daring for someone in his position. So that's where that thing [collaborating] came out of.

"I wanted to get him out of Seattle. I knew that he was there, and he was by himself. Everybody had tried everything they could, and that was my attempt to get him enough out of the head that he was in that he wouldn't kill himself or hurt himself. I thought it was going to be an overdose."

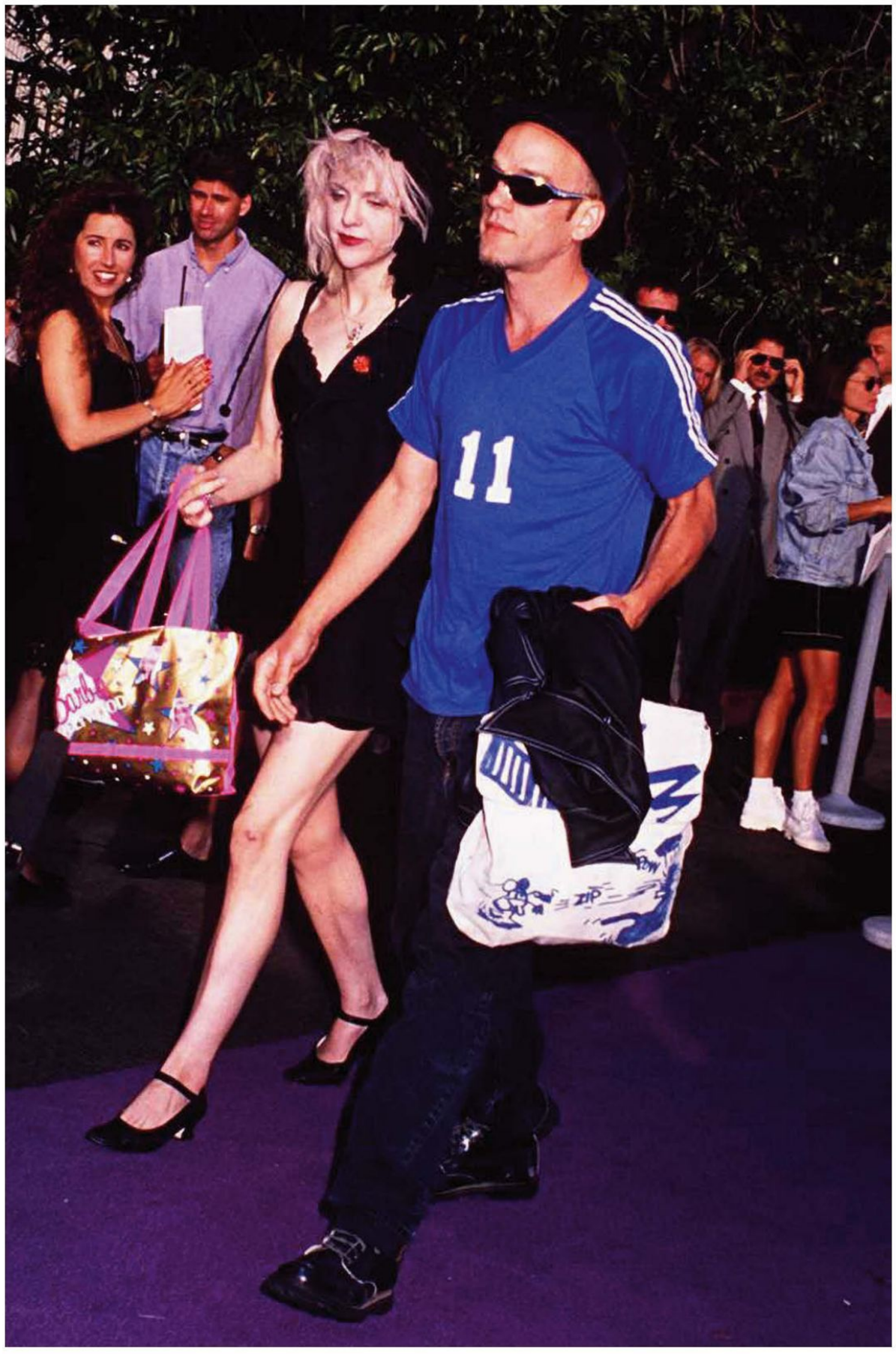
CASTLES & ROCKETSHIPS

Stipe was fired creatively by the way Cobain, and bands like Pearl Jam and Sonic Youth (whose guitarist and vocalist, Thurston Moore, played on *Monster*'s *Crush With Eyeliner*), were willing to acknowledge R.E.M.'s influence and primacy in American indie-rock – they respected their hustle and the fact that signing to a major hadn't stopped their artistic growth or shoved them sideways into AM radio dreck.

From the release of *Radio Free Europe* on the tiny Hib-Tone label in 1982 onwards, R.E.M.'s key components had remained the same: Bill Berry's unfussy work behind the kit, Mike Mills' melodic bass, Buck dropping in with clever riffs and weirdo overdubs, and Stipe pulling it all together with his idiosyncratic, hyper-intelligent words and vocal delivery.

But each of their records was also different to the last. Bouncing between *Reckoning* and *Document*, for example, was like being presented with a Lego set of a castle and finding out that you could take it apart and build a rocketship. R.E.M. were experts at rearranging the same pieces in a totally different order. *Monster* was no different, but it took a frustrating amount of time for the quartet to start functioning as that well-oiled unit.

During writing and recording with returning producer Scott Litt, which went down live at several spaces, including Crossover Soundstage in Atlanta, close to their hometown in Athens, there were health problems (an appendectomy for Mills, flu for Berry, an abscessed tooth for Stipe). There were also other important considerations (Buck's young children) that hadn't impinged on their work in the past.



Michael Stipe with Courtney Love at the MTV Music Awards in 1994 months after the death of Kurt Cobain

TAMMIE ARROYO/GETTY

R.E.M. were indie kids, they didn't waste time or money, because in the past they didn't have much of either, but here things began to get a little long-winded. "We never changed a schedule in all of our years. We'd do the schedule for a record – start on this day, end on this day – and if we went two days long, we'd be really over," Buck said in *Rolling Stone*. "This record, we changed the schedule 20 times. That's one of the reasons it's so up in the air."

"I just don't really feel that R.E.M. have to have any rules or boundaries"
PETER BUCK

Complicating things further was the mix. As *Monster* was recorded live, there were plenty of jagged edges that may or may not have to be removed, which was a headache back in '94. Earlier R.E.M. albums, even at their most rock on *Document* or *Lifes Rich Pageant*, had a pristine quality to them; they were latticeworks rather than

The songs
CONTINUED

8 Bang And Blame
A slow-burn rocker that almost shares a vocal cadence with *Losing My Religion*, *Bang And Blame* eventually explodes into a snotty, punky chorus before Buck takes over with a searing solo comprised mainly of feedback. Stipe is pulled back and forth by his words, sometimes accusatory but alternately wounded by outside forces: "You kiss on me, tug on me, rub on me, jump on me, you bang on me, beat on me, hit on me, let go on me… you let go on me." *Bang And Blame* is also one of a number of R.E.M. songs (*Stand/Spam* perhaps being the most famous) parodied by 'Weird' Al Yankovic.

9 I Took Your Name
Another song that prominently features the word 'blame', here Stipe seems weighed down by the demands of fame – he has tried, and will try again, to live up to expectations. "I don't want to be Iggy Pop, but if that's what it takes," he sings. Once R.E.M. were back out on the road, the song took on a major role in their plans, with another of Buck's tremolo-rigged intros deployed at the top of the order in their 1996 concert film *Road Movie* – a none-more-of-its-time exercise in mid-90s alt-rock cinematography.

10 Let Me In
Stipe's grief-stricken open call to Kurt Cobain. Backed by squalling guitars that owe plenty to Bob Mould's tone during his mid-period work with Hüsker Dü, he lays it all out on the wire for his friend as much as he can. Nothing is ever truly transparent with Stipe's writing, he's far too guarded for that, but here we get close. Among oblique references, there is an unvarnished "I had a mind to try to stop you, let me in, let me in." The song's heavy heart is lifted by Buck's simple, beautiful organ line, which pierces the otherwise distorted gloom of its palette.

11 Circus Envy
Another of Stipe's personal favourites from *Monster*. In a further nod to punk, Buck's guitar part is a couple of steps to the left of MC5's *Kick Out The Jams* and Stipe is at his most wilfully surreal. The imagery pours out: "I've got my telescope head in the haystack" but congeals around a handful of key words: jealous, mean, tease. There is a weariness to some of the lines, as though we're looking at an artist whose patience is wearing thin. "Put pepper in my coffee, I forgot to bark on command," Stipe drawls.

12 You
Built around ringing, filthy chords that appear to have their roots in an appreciation of The Velvet Underground, the album's closer is an unsettling ride. Stipe sings of lust that appears likely to eat itself – there are kisses that become maulings, syrup, lips being wiped clean. *Monster* is full of songs that tip over into obsession and that's distilled here; the intimacy of *You* is sweet and cloying, not liberating. Its shots at glamour are empty hopes that appear doomed to fail. "Let me watch you, Hollywood and Vine," Stipe sings. "And I want you like the movies, touch me now."

CHRIS CARROLL/CORBIS VIA GETTY

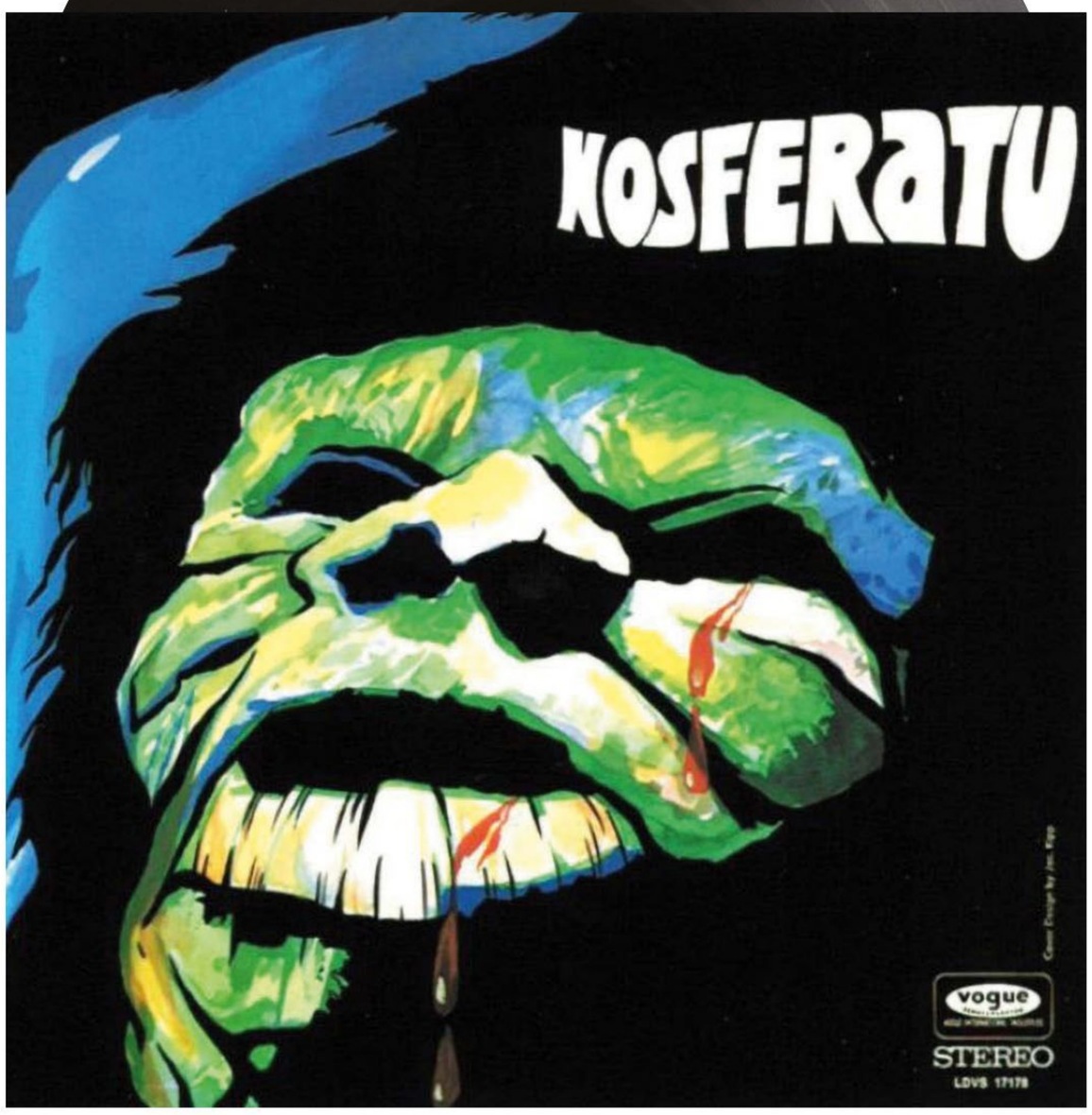
Peter Buck described *Monster* as "a 'rock' record, with the 'rock' in quotation marks"

sledgehammers. But on *Monster* they allowed things to bleed into one another, leaving Stipe's distorted voice and its roiling guitars fighting to bask in the spotlight. It's one of Buck's finest hours – the king of the subtle layer, playing as if he's soaked in other people's sweat two feet off the ground in some shithole club. Trying to sand those edges smooth would have ended in disaster.

The noise, though, circles everything R.E.M. set out to do with each of their records: evolve artistically, start a conversation and make music that will break down listeners' defences. *Monster* achieved all of its aims. It remains a total one-off in one of American rock's finest bodies of work.

It can be seen as the full stop on R.E.M.'s imperial phase (they'd never again hit No. 1 in the US) and also the beginning of the end for some of their formative relationships – Berry, Litt and manager Jefferson Holt would all take their leave following the release of the band's next outlier: 1996's *New Adventures In Hi-Fi*. But it's R.E.M. They found a way to move forwards again, and again, and again. Standing still is decidedly short on thrills. ●

"I'm aware that a lot of fans dropped off after we released it"
MICHAEL STIPE



Nosferatu

NOSFERATU

ALBUM

This lesser-known krautrock LP is a far-out treasure. Find an original pressing and you're in the money...

The krautrock scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s produced some fine bands that many collectors will of course be familiar with, yet with that boom period came a number of albums that at the time didn't garner the same acclaim as *Tago Mago* by Can or the 1971 debut by Faust. Since then, some of the albums by lesser-known acts have become highly desirable, often reaching astronomical figures on the collectors' market. One of those is the self-titled 1970 debut by Nosferatu.

Born from the same highly influential German scene as Kraftwerk, Guru Guru and Cluster, Nosferatu had a very short run and released only one album. Produced by the legendary Konrad 'Conny' Plank, who famously worked with the aforementioned bands, as well as Eurythmics and Ultravox later in his career, the album blends jazz-rock with raw aggression, searing guitars and nods towards psych-folk. While certainly not easy on the ear to the casual listener – with the flute and sax-driven freakouts not for everyone – it has, however, come to be highly regarded in contemporary reviews and is a weird and wonderful trip.

The LP itself has been reissued on two occasions, as well as the circulation of a low-quality bootleg, but the original pressing was released in Germany by the shortlived Vogue Paris subsidiary, Vogue Schallplatten. Like a lot of bizarre records from this time, very few copies were sold, and those who had them played and enjoyed them, which means finding examples in any condition is nothing short of a miracle. A Mint condition copy would set you back around £995 now, but serious collectors have paid higher prices just to own this elusive gem from a scene that continues to have an influence on many of today's indie bands. ***Glen Bushell***

Wax Facts

NOSFERATU
NOSFERATU
VOGUE
SCHALLPLATTEN
1970

£995

THE ESSENTIAL

Southern Soul

With its roots in gospel and R&B, Southern soul is the gritty alternative to Motown. Gary Tipp goes deep

Northern soul has always been known for its polished arrangements, with an endless procession of its earworm perfection delivered straight off the pop factory assembly line and directly into the charts. Indeed, Motown was known for its early-morning quality control meetings, where songwriters and producers would listen to each other's songs and rigorously critique them.

Southern soul was not at all like that. Rougher, grittier, funkier, it took the zeal of gospel music and fused it with the dynamic energy of R&B to produce something altogether different. This music was about an earthy groove with greasy horns, chicken-scratch guitars and heartfelt vocals blasting out a righteous wall of sound. It was a gritty, raw alternative to Motown. Southern soul was at its peak during the 1960s, but its popularity declined slowly due to disco's dominance in the mid 1970s.

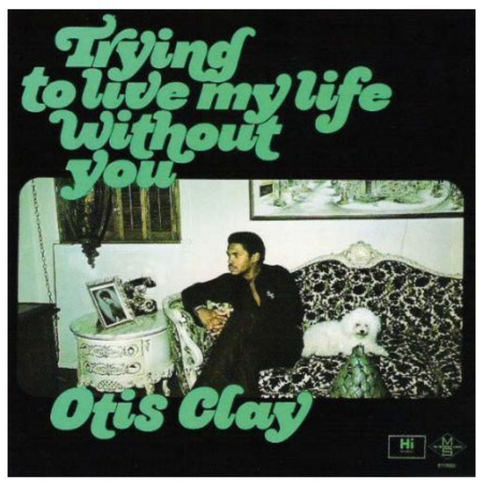
Many of the recordings were laid down at Rick Hall's FAME Studios or the rival Muscle Shoals Sound Studio down the road. A good many were cut at the Stax recording studio at 926 E McLemore Avenue.

Memphis labels such as Goldwax, Hi and, most famously, Stax were significant for their contribution to the creation of Southern soul music. Ahmet Ertegun's Atlantic Records also got in on the act and snaffled away some of the major stars, including soul's very own queen, Aretha Franklin. While Otis Redding's blistering appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 only further helped to solidify Southern soul as a player in the popular music climate of the time.

In the first instance, our price estimates are always based on the UK first press of the album in question.

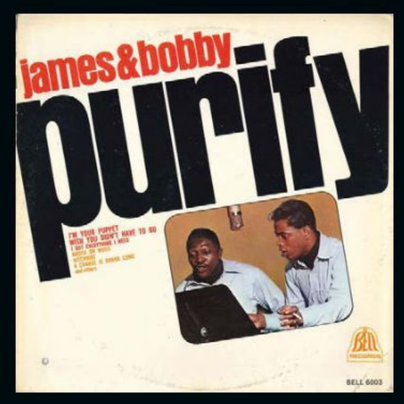
40 MERRY CLAYTON

MERRY CLAYTON
A&M 1971
The New Orleans-born Clayton had a successful career as a session singer, recording tracks with Ray Charles, The Supremes, Joe Cocker and, even, Elvis Presley, but she will be forever known for her background vocals on The Rolling Stones' *Gimme Shelter*. Her self-titled second album demonstrates she was equally adept when taking the centre of the stage.
FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2018 ODE £20 (US IMPORT)



39 OTIS CLAY

TRYING TO LIVE MY LIFE WITHOUT YOU
LONDON 1972
Like so many Southern soul singers, Otis Clay cut his teeth on gospel and his first release for the label is a broody work of soulful wonder. The title track was a hit for Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band.
FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST 2014 FAT POSSUM £18



38 JAMES & BOBBY PURIFY

JAMES & BOBBY PURIFY
STATESIDE 1967
The duo shot to fame in late 1966 with their debut single for Bell Records, *I'm Your Puppet*, which quickly became a Southern soul classic. Written by Dan Penn and Spooner Oldham, it reached the top 10 in the US Pop and R&B Billboard charts and was nominated for a Grammy. The original 'Bobby Purify' (Robert Lee Dickey) was replaced by a second 'Bobby Purify' (Ben Moore) in the 1970s.
FIRST PRESS £60-£65
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

37 SHIRLEY BROWN

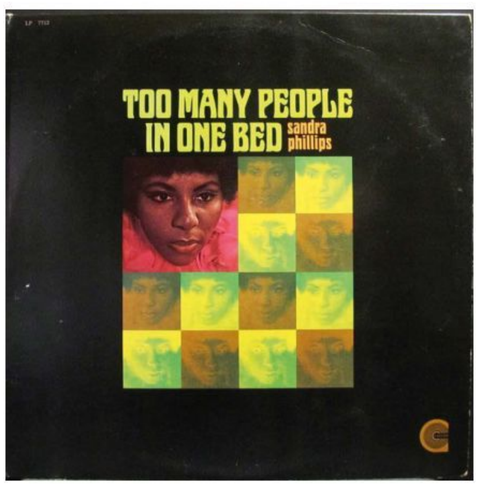
WOMAN TO WOMAN
STAX 1975
The opening monologue to the title track of Brown's debut album finds her confronting 'the other woman' over the phone, and it must be said that Shirley sure doesn't take any shit from Barbara. The track was one of the last big hit singles for the Stax label.
FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2013 FANTASY £20 (US IMPORT)

36 BAR-KAYS
SOUL FINGER

ATCO 1967

The Bar-Kays scored their first hit with the horn-filled *Soul Finger*. Further success came when Otis Redding hired them as his backing band. But tragedy struck when Redding and four out of six Bar-Kays members perished in a plane crash.

FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2008 RHINO £15



35 SANDRA PHILLIPS
TOO MANY PEOPLE IN ONE BED

CANYON 1970

Released in the US on the Canyon label in 1970, *Too Many People in One Bed* was Southern soul chanteuse Sandra Phillips' only album. Despite being a Swamp Dogg production, he also wrote the majority of the tracks, this is a restrained (by his standards) collection of sweet Southern soul with just a hint of gospel.

FIRST PRESS £50 US IMPORT
LATEST 2013 ALIVE £25 (US IMPORT)

34 Z.Z. HILL
THE BRAND NEW Z.Z. HILL

MOJO 1972

Z.Z. started out singing gospel under his real name Azari Hill and had released a couple of strong solo albums before teaming up with producer Jerry 'Swamp Dogg' Williams Jr. *The Brand New Z.Z. Hill* would turn out to be a concept album based on a love triangle and would prove to be the most satisfying album of his long career.

FIRST PRESS £25-£30
LATEST 210 ALIVE £20 (US IMPORT)

33 SAM & DAVE
SOUL MEN

STAX 1967

Sam Moore and Dave Prater first hooked up in 1961 in Miami, but it wasn't until they were coupled up with the songwriting team of Isaac Hayes and David Porter in 1965 that success came their way. The dynamite duo were powerful performers and their third album for Stax sees them reach a punchy, driving pinnacle.

FIRST PRESS £40
LATEST 2017 STAX £18

32 BOOKER T & THE M.G'S
GREEN ONIONS

LONDON 1964

As the house band at Stax studios, Booker T & The M.G's were the sound behind the Memphis scene's brightest stars and the crack outfit's contribution to Southern soul is immeasurable. The ageless title track was an improvised studio jam based around Booker T. Jones' electric organ, with Steve Cropper, Duck Dunn and Al Jackson coolly latching onto to the laid-back groove.

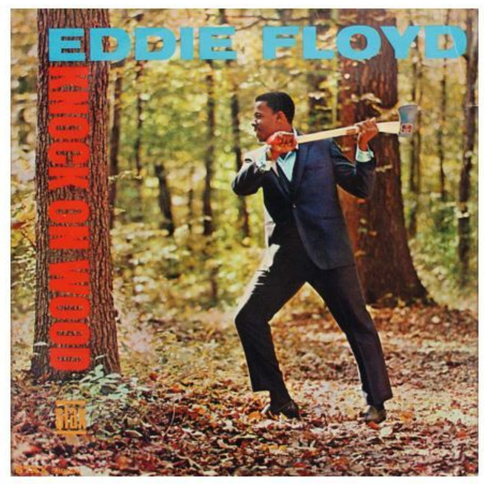
FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST 2017 DOL £15

31 THE STAPLE SINGERS
SOUL FOLK IN ACTION

STAX 1960

By signing to Stax in 1968, The Staple Singers changed musical direction, moving away from the deeply Southern gospel style and towards full-blown soul. Produced by Steve Cropper and backed by Booker T. & The M.G's, the change did them good, with Mavis free to unleash her vocals on contemporary soul hits such as *(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay.*

FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST OUT OF PRESS



30 EDDIE FLOYD
KNOCK ON WOOD

STAX 1967

Born in Alabama but raised in Detroit, songwriter Eddie Floyd had a foot in both the Northern and Southern soul camps. After limited success in the north, he signed to Stax in 1967, where his second single for the Memphis label, the album's unforgettable title track, made him into a big star. The track was later covered by David Bowie during his short-lived 'soul' phase.

FIRST PRESS £40
LATEST 2015 MUSIC ON VINYL £18

The Southern Soul Jukebox

A DOZEN DYNAMITE SOUTHERN SOUL 45s FOR YOUR COLLECTION

JAMES CARR
DARK END OF THE STREET
STATESIDE 1967 £30

ETTA JAMES
TELL MAMA
CHESS 1967 £30

ANN PEEBLES
I CAN'T STAND THE RAIN
LONDON 1973 £8

ARETHA FRANKLIN
CHAIN OF FOOLS
ATLANTIC 1967 £10

PERCY SLEDGE
WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN
ATLANTIC 1966 £8

OTIS CLAY
TRYING TO LIVE MY LIFE WITHOUT YOU
LONDON 1972 £12

OTIS REDDING
MR PITIFUL
ATLANTIC 1965 £25-£30

WILLIAM BELL
I FORGOT TO BE YOUR LOVER
STAX 1968 £10

CARLA THOMAS
COMFORT ME
ATLANTIC 1966 £12

BETTYE SWANN
MAKE ME YOURS
CBS 1967 £70

ARTHUR CONLEY
SWEET SOUL MUSIC
ATLANTIC 1967 £10

JIMMY HUGHES
STEAL AWAY
PYE 1964 £30

Bettye Swann is one of Southern soul's most under-recognised talents

29 BETTYE SWANN
MAKE ME YOURS
MONEY 1967

The criminally underrated Bettye Swann combined the rich power of Southern soul with the production gloss of the North to create a persuasive sound all of her own. The self-penned title track was a No.1 R&B smash, and her wonderful version of The Temptations' *Don't Look Back* is worth the price of admission alone.

FIRST PRESS £100 US
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

GILLES PETARD/REDFERNS/GETTY

28 CLARENCE CARTER
THE DYNAMIC CLARENCE CARTER
ATLANTIC 1969

The Dynamic Clarence Carter is the second album of classic Southern soul released by Carter on the Atlantic label. It opens with his powerful version of *I'd Rather Go Blind*, which is kind of ironic as Carter was sightless from birth. Other tracks include a young Duane Allman on guitar – as on the funky blues of *The Road Of Love* and *Weekend Love*.

FIRST PRESS £25-£30
LATEST 2011 ATLANTIC (US IMPORT)

27 MAVIS STAPLES
ONLY FOR THE LONELY
STAX 1970

Only For The Lonely was recorded by Mavis Staples in 1969 and released the following year on Volt. This wonderful album captures Mavis at her breath-taking best and is considered to be one of the best albums she recorded. It includes her near-definitive version of Bacharach/David's *A House Is Not A Home*.

FIRST PRESS £45
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

26 JOE TEX
THE NEW BOSS
ATLANTIC 1965

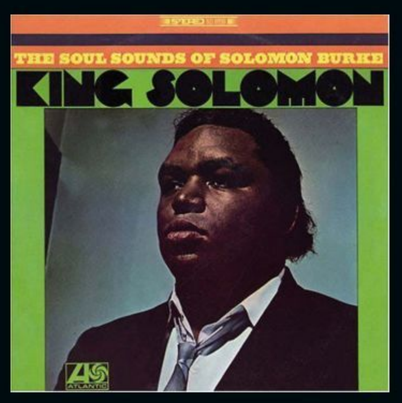
The irrepressible Joe Tex was the man behind Southern soul's first hit when *Hold What You've Got* made it to No. 5 on the Billboard charts in 1965. *The New Boss* saw Tex add a warm, soulful edge to a couple of C&W numbers. Later on, big Joe took the disco dollar and charted with the dubious *Ain't Gonna Bump No More (With No Big Fat Woman)*.

FIRST PRESS £45
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

25 SYL JOHNSON
TOTAL EXPLOSION
LONDON 1975

Syl Johnson may have operated in the shadows between Al Green and Ann Peebles during his time at Hi Records, but his 1975 album *Total Explosion* is right up there with the label's greatest releases. Funky and brash, just like the man himself, it includes his biggest hit, ironically, a cover of Al Green's *Take Me To The River*.

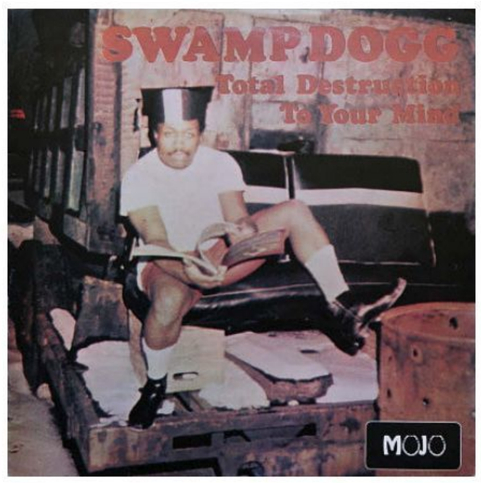
FIRST PRESS £18
LATEST 2012 PURE PLEASURE £15



24 SOLOMON BURKE
KING SOLOMON
ATLANTIC 1968

Just like Otis Redding and Don Covay, Solomon Burke was an important early influence on The Rolling Stones, who covered his *Cry To Me* on *Out Of Our Heads*. Burke, unlike The Stones, never had a Top 20 hit, yet his wonderful, sonorous voice and emotional phrasing register him as a vitally important soul pioneer, nowhere more so than on this his fourth soul album.

FIRST PRESS £40
LATEST 2018 PURE PLEASURE £20



23 SWAMP DOGG
TOTAL DESTRUCTION TO YOUR MIND
MOJO 1972

With his mind well and truly blown by psychedelic drugs, songwriter and producer Jerry Williams Jr started to record under the name of Swamp Dogg. Despite the LSD and an affiliation to the counterculture of the day, his debut album, *Total Destruction To Your Mind*, was a raw slice of Southern soul in the tradition of Muscle Shoals. Needless to say, the more fried he got, the funkier and stranger his output became.

FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST 2013 ALIVE £20 (US IMPORT)

22 ARTHUR CONLEY
SWEET SOUL MUSIC
ATLANTIC 1967

Arthur Conley penned the irresistibly joyful title cut of his debut album with his mentor Otis Redding as a heartfelt homage to soul music. The track name checks not only his idol, but also James Brown, Lou Rawls and Sam & Dave, making Conley an overnight star in the process. His debut album was released on Atlantic in the UK.

FIRST PRESS £35-£40
LATEST 2014 MUSIC ON VINYL £18

21 DORIS DUKE
I'M A LOSER
MOJO 1971

Until a recent 2010 reissue surfaced, Duke's first album was something of a long-lost classic. A gritty collection of Stax-inspired tracks, including her hit *To The Other Woman (I'm The Other Woman), I'm A Loser* is pure Southern soul right down to the gospel tones in Duke's vocal delivery. Crazed producer Swamp Dogg does a great job of pulling everything together.

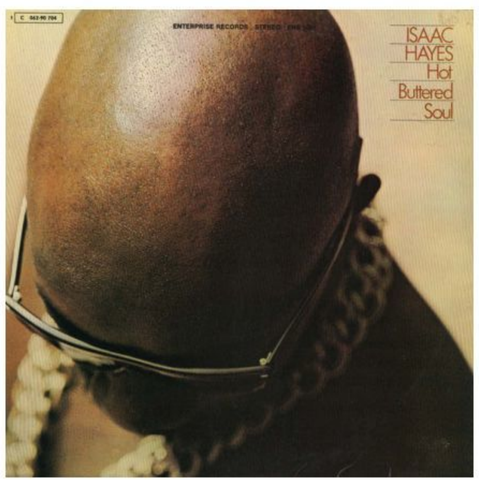
FIRST PRESS £50
LATEST 2010 KENT £18

Carla Thomas, daughter of Rufus and the Queen of Memphis Soul

18 CARLA THOMAS
THE QUEEN ALONE
STAX 1967

In the glorious decade and a half of sound that was Stax in the 60s and early 70s, Carla Thomas sat on her throne as the Queen of Memphis Soul. Her fourth album for the label was among her majestic best, with Carla drawing on musical elements of both Southern and Northern soul, proving the two weren't by any means mutually exclusive.

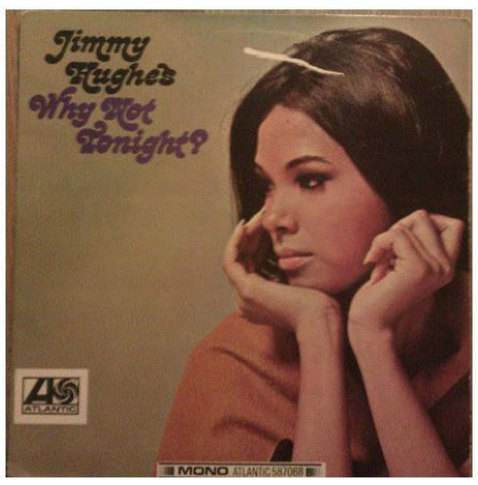
FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2018 STAX £18 (GERMAN IMPORT)



20 ISAAC HAYES
HOT BUTTERED SOUL
STAX 1969

On his landmark second album, Isaac Hayes emerged as one of Southern soul's most creative, boundary-pushing forces. By stretching out his songs beyond the traditional three-minute mark, he was sidestepping convention to produce a devastatingly different album.

FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2018 CRAFT £20

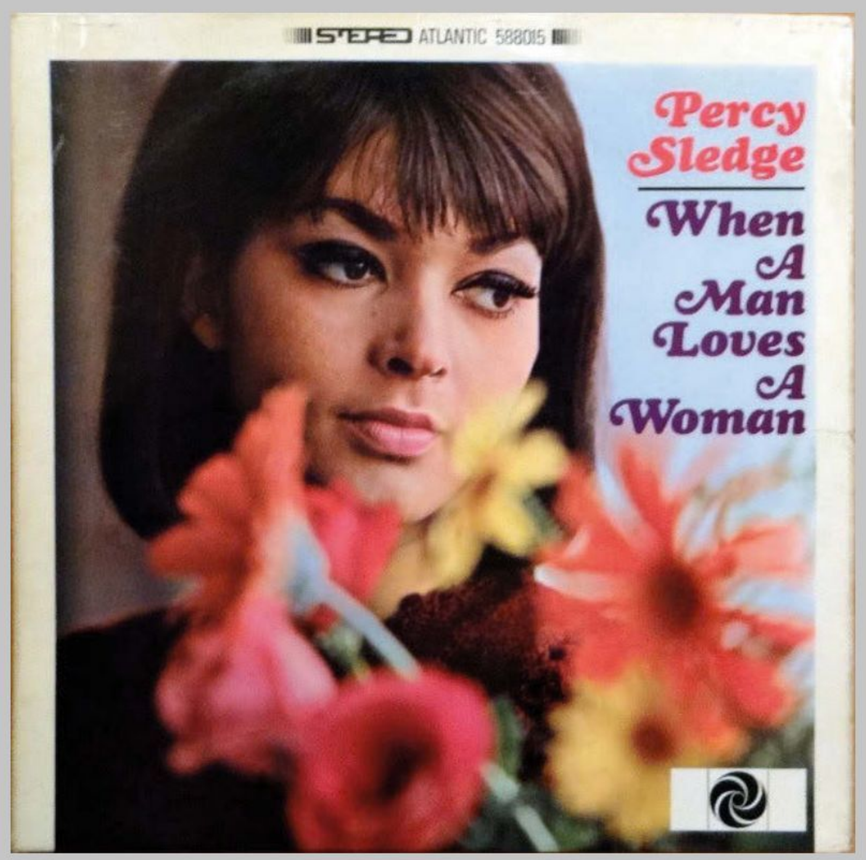


19 JIMMY HUGHES
WHY NOT TONIGHT?
ATLANTIC 1967

Considered by many as a Southern soul masterpiece, Jimmy Hughes' second album is a sizzling set of up-tempo blues and gospel-inflected ballads. Hughes was a mainstay of Rick Hall's Fame label, helping to establish the studio with a string of early hits.

FIRST PRESS £80
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

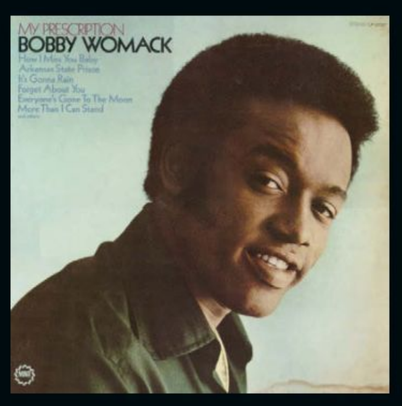


17 PERCY SLEDGE
WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN
ATLANTIC 1966
An important figure in the development of Southern soul, Percy Sledge will be forever associated with the title track of his debut album. A teary ballad that he delivered with true heartfelt anguish, but to give the man his due he sung all his songs that way – as this early but rarely bettered collection attests.
FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2011 ATLANTIC £20

16 OTIS REDDING & CARLA THOMAS
KING & QUEEN
STAX 1967
Southern soul's homage to Marvin Gaye's successful duet albums saw Otis Redding and Carla Thomas team up to take on the biggest hits of the day. Sparks fly during versions of *Knock On Wood* and *When Something Is Wrong With My Baby,* and the chemistry between the two Stax powerhouses is a whole lot of fun.
FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST 2017 RHINO £18

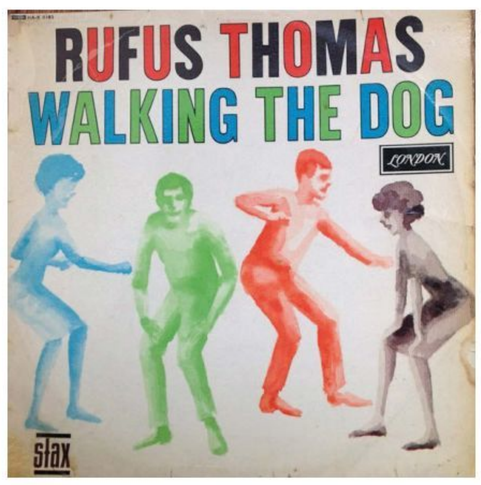
15 JOHNNIE TAYLOR
WANTED: ONE SOUL SINGER
STAX 1967
Nicknamed the Philosopher Of Soul, Johnnie Taylor's *Wanted: One Soul Singer* is a selection of raw, bluesy Southern soul, featuring the hits *Just The One I've Been Looking For* and *I Had A Dream*. Taylor's voice was one of the finest, and as a lady-killing balladeer he knew no equal.
FIRST PRESS £50
LATEST 2016 MUSIC ON VINYL £18

14 CANDI STATON
I'M JUST A PRISONER
CAPITOL 1970
With a career dating back to the 50s, the evergreen Candi Staton is one of Southern soul's great survivors. Recorded at Rick Hall's Fame Studios, *I'm Just A Prisoner* is a blistering mix of country, R&B and the blues. As well as the bluesy title track, it also includes the well-reasoned *I'd Rather Be An Old Man's Sweetheart (Than A Young Man's Fool).*
FIRST PRESS £30-£35
LATEST OUT OF PRESS



13 BOBBY WOMACK
MY PRESCRIPTION
MINIT 1970
Womack's career was long and varied, and before getting the funk he cut his teeth on Southern soul, writing a lot of material for Wilson Pickett during his early years. *My Prescription* is a soulful stomper of an album full of thundering grooves and intimate vocals. Curiously, it also features a cover of Jonathan King's *Everyone's Gone To The Moon.*
FIRST PRESS £50 (US IMPORT)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

12 DON COVAY & THE GOODTIMERS
MERCY!
ATLANTIC 1964
Don Covay is one of the great soul songwriters, with scores of his songs recorded by well-known artists. Case in point is the title track of his excellent 1965 debut that was adopted by The Rolling Stones as the opener on the *Out Of Our Heads* LP. Indeed, Jagger's vocals during this period seem more than a little indebted to Covay's brash, bluesy style.
FIRST PRESS £50 (US IMPORT)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

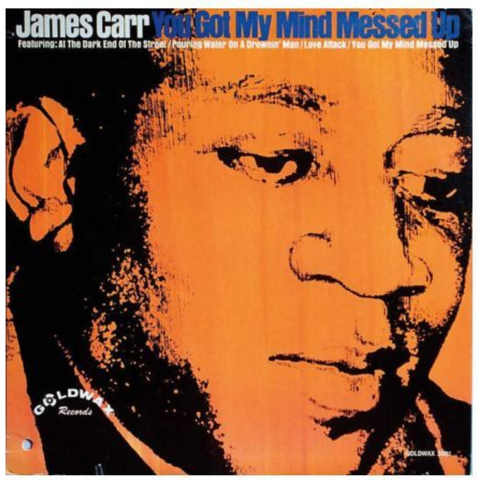


11 RUFUS THOMAS
WALKING THE DOG
LONDON 1964
The effervescent Rufus Thomas, loving father of Carla, was the embodiment of the Memphis soul scene and his recorded output stood for everything that Motown wasn't. His debut album was a raw, gritty slice of rough-around-the-edges R&B that more than made up in energy what it lacked in production gloss and graces. The Rolling Stones later covered the canine-perambulating title track on their debut album.
FIRST PRESS £80
LATEST 2017 STAX £18

10 WILSON PICKETT
THE EXCITING WILSON PICKETT
ATLANTIC 1966

Packed to the rafters with hits, Pickett's sophomore effort was a giant step in the right direction after his patchy debut. The album established his rep not only as a major soul star but also as the man who'd get you up on the dancefloor.

FIRST PRESS £25
LATEST 2018 MUSIC ON VINYL £18



9 JAMES CARR
YOU'VE GOT MY MIND MESSED UP
STATESIDE 1967

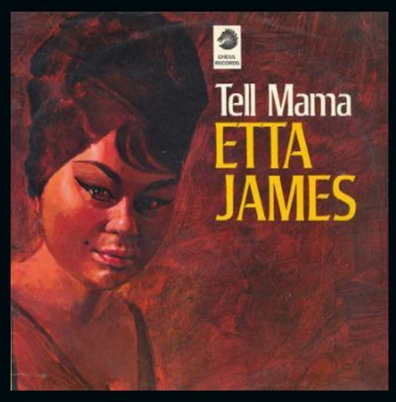
Running Otis close in terms of raw emotion, James Carr's 1966 debut is deemed an essential by Southern soul collectors. Carr's considerable interpretive powers are unleashed on a dozen classic heartbreakers, including *Pouring Water On A Drowning Man* and most memorably Chips Moman and Dan Penn's lament to illicit love *Dark End Of The Street*.

FIRST PRESS £100
LATEST 2002 KENT £30

8 DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
DUSTY IN MEMPHIS
PHILIPS 1969

Atlantic Records' Ahmet Ertegun was the man behind the idea of shipping Dusty to the home of music she was making. It was a venture not without drama, as Ms Springfield turned full-on diva upon arrival in Memphis. Despite the histrionics, her vocals worked wonderfully well alongside Jerry Wexler's production to create an essential classic.

FIRST PRESS £50-£55
LATEST 2019 UMC £18



7 ETTA JAMES
TELL MAMA
CHESS 1968

With her personal life in turmoil after a drugs bust and a brief jail sentence, Chess Records' siren Etta James was encouraged to record away from the temptations of Chicago. She pitched up at Muscle Shoals studio and under the production guidance of Rick Hall delivered one of the finest soul albums of the 60s. Track two is her peerless version of *I'd Rather Go Blind*.

FIRST PRESS £45
LATEST 2019 4 MEN WITH BEARDS £20 (US IMPORT)

6 ANN PEEBLES
I CAN'T STAND THE RAIN
LONDON 1974

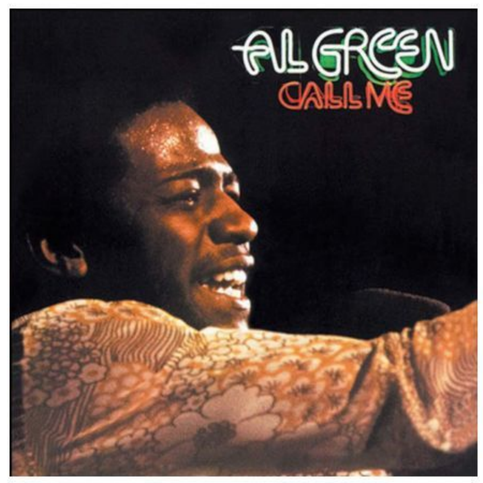
The album's memorable title cut, famously a favourite of John Lennon and a big UK hit, witnesses a heartbroken Ann lamenting lost love ("I can't stand the rain on my window/ Bringing back sweet memories"). It's the highlight of a strong collection of soulful tearjerkers delivered in Ann's sultry tones and backed by the classy groove of the Hi Records rhythm section.

FIRST PRESS £20
LATEST 2014 FAT POSSUM (US IMPORT)

5 OV WRIGHT
A NICKEL AND A NAIL AND ACE OF SPADES
BACKBEAT 1970

Overton Vertis Wright is one of Southern soul's most criminally overlooked leading men, as this dynamic slice of wax, featuring as the title suggests two of his biggest hits, so readily bears witness. Wright, who learnt his trade as a gospel singer, worked out of Memphis and his punchy R&B is as passionate and proud as the city itself. Sadly, OV died of a heart attack aged 41.

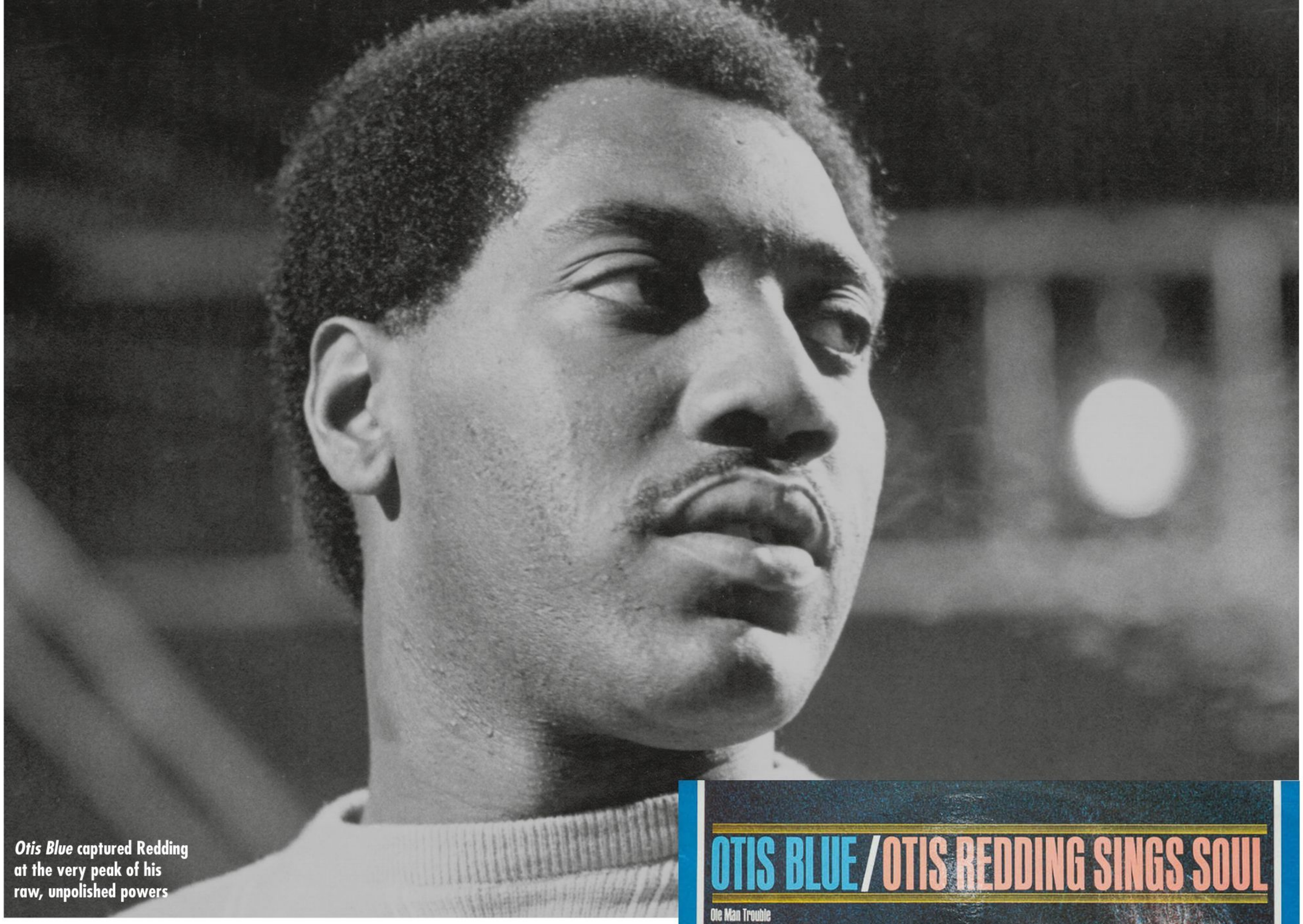
FIRST PRESS £200 US
LATEST OUT OF PRESS



4 AL GREEN
CALL ME
LONDON 1973

The Reverend's seductive singles for Hi Records in the 70s place him in Southern soul's upper echelons as one of its greatest vocalists. *Call Me* found Green at the height of his non-secular powers with *Here I Am (Come And Take Me)*, *You Ought To Be With Me* and the incandescent title cut providing the chart hits. Willie Mitchell's masterful production graces a near-perfect album that is as smooth and effortless as Green's own immaculate singing style.

FIRST PRESS £15
LATEST FAT POSSUM 2019 £18 (US IMPORT)



Otis Blue captured Redding at the very peak of his raw, unpolished powers

3 WILLIAM BELL
A TRIBUTE TO A KING
ATCO 1967

William Bell was a talented songwriter and had his first hit on the Stax label with the self-penned classic *You Don't Miss Your Water* in 1961. Curiously, his solo album didn't arrive until six years later, but the magnificent *The Soul Of A Bell* (released in the UK as *A Tribute To A King*) was worth the wait. Drenched in gospel-richness, it was a fitting showcase for Bell's heartfelt singing with his passionate version of *Do Right Woman, Do Right Man* the standout track.

FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST 2019
PURE PLEASURE £20

2 ARETHA FRANKLIN
I'VE NEVER LOVED A MAN THE WAY I LOVE YOU
ATLANTIC 1967

After six years and nine so-so albums with Columbia, Aretha's fiery, soulful side was finally unleashed on her debut for Atlantic Records. The album's magnificent title track was cut at Muscle Shoals in Alabama with an assembled cast of the studio's top musicians. A falling out meant that the album was completed in New York, and the resulting sessions produced one of soul's landmark albums.

FIRST PRESS £20
LATEST 2016 RHINO £18

1 OTIS REDDING
OTIS BLUE/OTIS REDDING SINGS SOUL
ATLANTIC 1965

With a fully realised collection of inspired covers and self-penned originals, Otis Redding's majestic third album set him on the road to crossover fame. Recorded at the Stax studio with the classic M.G's line-up as back-up, the great man's emotional delivery set him aside as one of Southern soul's most enduring talents. Less than three years later, he was gone when his plane crashed into Lake Monona.

FIRST PRESS £40
LATEST 2015 RHINO £18

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

DECCA AT 90

Founded as an offshoot from the Decca Gramophone Company in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash, the British label went on to become one of the biggest record companies on the planet, signing some of the most illustrious names in music history, including The Rolling Stones (though famously not The Beatles). **Gareth Murphy** goes back to the start…

Manufacturing gramophones but not records is like selling razors but not consumable blades." This was the famous conclusion of Edward Lewis, a 29-year-old Cambridge grad and financial consultant. It was early 1929, and he'd just completed a market study for Decca Gramophone Company, a struggling gramophone maker. When his demoralised clients didn't take his practical advice, Lewis decided to do it himself. He rounded up a group of investors and bought them out.

Re-founding Decca in 1929 as a proper record label with a simplified name, the young entrepreneur couldn't have picked a worse time. The archaic gramophone industry had already been hit severely throughout the 1920s by a newer invention called radio. But it was the Wall Street Crash later that October which sounded the death knell for most record companies. This was the first record crash, eerily similar to the recent one. For over a decade in the inter-war period, it looked like buying disc records was an obsolete business. America's already struggling record business was decimated from an annual output of 100 million records in 1927 to just 10 million in 1930. Amazingly, it was from this crater of bankruptcies, fire sales and existential crisis that little Decca, an English start-up, became the hottest label in the world.

Lewis's genius move was to strike when the Great Depression was at rock bottom. In 1934, he hired an astute wheeler-dealer to launch an ambitious New York branch. Jack Kapp was a producer at Brunswick, who'd been careful to insert top-man clauses in his artist contracts, a detail that allowed him to take Bing Crosby to the newly formed Decca. Together, Lewis and Kapp poached the best salesmen from Columbia to chase a brand new market growing around Wurlitzer jukeboxes. Within one year of Prohibition being lifted in 1933, some 25,000 Wurlitzers were consuming over half a million disposable 25-cent records in bars across America – a godsend in the depths of the Depression.

Within just five years, Decca's American company was selling 19 million records annually, more than the erstwhile giants, RCA-Victor and CBS-Columbia. The quintessential pop label of its day, Decca spotted and scooped up nearly all of the newest-sounding hit acts of the late 30s: Count Basie, The Andrews Sisters, Glenn Miller, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, The Mills Brothers, Louis Jordan. Its studios and pressing factories were better run; its jukebox jobbers and radio pluggers were the fastest to pounce. And when, in 1940, the record industry experienced a strike by studios and composers, it was Decca that first negotiated with unions and began poaching out-of-work stars from inactive Columbia, notably Billie Holiday, whose best recordings were on Decca in the mid-40s.

The Rolling Stones were Decca's blockbuster act during the 60s

BACK TO LIFE

That's how Decca captured the sound and spirit of World War II, even supplying the lion's share of 'V-Discs' to soldiers. With their stars touring bases and personifying the spirit and sacrifices of the Allied war effort, the US Army's official magazine, *Yank*, claimed that no other celebrity, president or religious leader did as much for wartime morale as Bing Crosby. To this day, the biggest-selling single of all time remains

Life was always busy at the Decca record plant during the 60s and 70s

MARK AND COLLEEN HAYWARD/GETTY JACQUES HAILLOT/SYGMA/SYGMA VIA GETTY

his 1943 rendition of *White Christmas*. With so many millions separated and depressed by the war, its cryptic lyrics struck a profound chord and *White Christmas* became the No. 1 smash hit for three Christmases consecutively.

Meanwhile, back in London, Decca's HQ provided the anthem of the British war effort, Vera Lynn's heartbreaking and quasi-religious *We'll Meet Again*. Behind the scenes, a wing of Decca's R&D laboratories moved to the Isle of Wight and developed top-secret technology for the Ministry of Defence. Called Decca Radar, it was a state-of-the-art ship positioning system that enabled the D-Day operations to sweep mines and land troops with unprecedented speed and accuracy.

Ultimately, it was World War II that brought the record trade back to life. Thanks mostly to Decca, record sales in the late 40s grew back to their pre-radio sizes. But it was at this juncture that Decca's American and English companies were split. Although there would be sales agreements between the two sides of the same trademark, Edward Lewis had to form London Records in 1947, a new American subsidiary for all the English records that American Decca was passing up.

By the time rock 'n' roll invaded England, Decca was a huge and aging machine in need of constant hits. That's why it became the obvious port of call for a younger generation of impresarios operating semi-independently. If ever there was a genesis moment of British pop, it had be the Soho talent agencies sprouting up in the late 50s between the West End theatres and the music publishers of Denmark Street. In particular, there was Larry Parnes, a gay talent agent who recruited, groomed and signed to Decca arguably England's first ever naughty-boy rockers, Billy Fury and Tommy Steele.

Dick Rowe, the man who uttered the immortal line: "Guitar groups are on their way out, Mr Epstein"

60S POP FACTORY

With studio technology improving rapidly, the pioneer producers weren't far behind. In 1962, the eccentric Joe Meek almost single-handedly produced *Telstar* for Decca, the odd-ball recording (credited under The Tornados band name) that became the opening theme tune to London's swinging 60s. But by all accounts, the backstage incident that most affected Decca's second life as a 60s pop factory happened earlier that year. In January 1962, Decca's 41-year-old A&R chief, Dick Rowe, turned down an obscure Liverpool group called The Beatles. "Guitar groups are on their way out, Mr Epstein," were apparently his immortal words. He'd spend the rest of his life living it down, but it may have been a blessing in disguise. Not only did The Beatles end up

The 'Forces Sweetheart', Vera Lynn, was an early UK Decca recording artist

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY KEYSTONE/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY

THE BEST OF THE SUPREME LABEL

A selection of Decca and Deram's rock highlights from the 60s and 70s. **Gary Tipp** raids the archive

BILLY FURY
THE SOUND OF FURY
Decca 1960
The Liverpool Elvis' debut was released as a 10" LP. Panned at the time, it's now regarded as one of the great British rock 'n' roll albums.
£200

DAVID BOWIE
DAVID BOWIE
Deram 1967
Bowie's whimsical debut finds the great man marking out his territory as an all-round entertainer. It's a far cry from the glam and glory to come.
£900

THE ROLLING STONES
LET IT BLEED
Decca 1969
The Stones ended the 60s on a creative high with their last studio album for Decca. The first mono press includes a red inner, poster and stickered sleeve.
£400

THE ZOMBIES
BEGIN HERE
Decca 1965
For the most part, The Zombies' debut was a collection of covers, but it does include Rod Argent's *She's Not There*. Next up was *Odessey And Oracle,* but not on Decca.
£500

SMALL FACES
FROM THE BEGINNING
Decca 1967
The short-arse mods' second album on Decca is rammed to the rafters with chart hits such as *Hey Girl, Sha La La La La Lee* and the glorious *All Or Nothing*.
£280

KEEF HARTLEY BAND
HALFBREED
Decca 1969
Drummer Hartley's debut is a forgotten jazz-fusion classic. The opening track includes a phone call of John Mayall sacking him from his band.
£85

THEM
THE ANGRY YOUNG THEM
Decca 1965
There were half a dozen Van Morrison originals on the Northern Ireland band's Decca debut, including the haunting *Mystic Eyes* and the eternal garage-rock anthem *Gloria*.
£200

THE MOODY BLUES
DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED
Deram 1967
The Moody Blues fused rock with classical to produce a landmark prog release. An early concept album, it includes the evergreen *Nights In White Satin*.
£30

BLACK CAT BONES
BARBED WIRE SANDWICH
Decca 1970
Free's Paul Kossoff left Black Cat Bones just before they recorded their only album. A heavy slice of psychedelic blues, a first press is highly sought after by collectors.
£190

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
NORTH COUNTRY MAID
Decca 1966
Faithfull's third album on the label saw her move away from breathy pop to produce a folk-rock album complete with Donovan and Bert Jansch covers.
£75

THE ROLLING STONES
BEGGARS BANQUET
Decca 1968
Beggars Banquet is the LP where The Stones dropped the pseudo psychedelic frippery of *Satanic Majesties…* and returned to their dirty rock 'n' roll roots.
£200

TEN YEARS AFTER
CRICKLEWOOD GREEN
Deram 1970
Axe hero Alvin Lee was known as the fastest guitarist in the West, and this bluesy classic was released on the back of a triumphant set at Woodstock.
£100

JOHN MAYALL WITH ERIC CLAPTON
BLUES BREAKERS
Decca 1966
A UK blues boom classic, the sleeve features budding yet disinterested guitar god Clapton reading *The Beano*. A mono first press is the one you're after.
£150

JOHN MAYALL
BLUES FROM LAUREL CANYON
Decca 1968
The pioneering bluesman was so blown away by a trip to LA that he recorded an album about his time there… in West Hampstead. Fellow axemen Peter Green and Mick Taylor both feature.
£40

EGG
THE POLITE FORCE
1971
The Canterbury-based prog-rock trio were a more arty, less bombastic version of ELP. This release from 1971 is their finest moment on vinyl.
£100

CAT STEVENS
MATTHEW & SON
Deram 1967
Cat Stevens' swinging debut album was an early release on the Deram sub-label. Bigger things were afoot for Cat when he jumped ship to Island Records.
£25

'IGGINBOTTOM
'IGGINBOTTOM'S WRENCH
Deram 1969
'Igginbottom's Wrench was the one and only album from Barnsley jazz-psych-proggers 'Igginbottom featuring guitar virtuoso Allan Holdsworth.
£150

CARAVAN
IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK
Deram 1971
Caravan emerged from the Canterbury scene as prog-rock innovators, with their inventive third album often considered as the pinnacle of their powers.
£120

ALL PRICES ARE BASED ON UK FIRST PRESS

with George Martin and Ringo Starr instead, once Beatlemania began exploding throughout 1963, Decca's pop department started to take far bigger risks.

A case in point is Shel Talmy, a young American on a work-related trip to London in 1963. During what was supposed to be a regular job interview, Talmy bamboozled Dick Rowe into an independent producer deal. Talmy's friend, Nick Venet, had given him unreleased acetates of *Surfin' Safari* by The Beach Boys and *There's Music In The Air* by Lou Rawls. Pretending they were his own creations, Talmy talked Rowe into producing for Decca on royalties and a weekly stipend. As Talmy tells *Long Live Vinyl*: "I admit I was being brash, but I didn't care because I thought I was going home in five weeks. Dick agreed to my terms and said, 'You start today!' He gave me three Irish harmonica players called The Bachelors." Although a somewhat comical baptism by fire, Talmy scored an immediate hit and began scouting around London as Decca's very own outlaw American.

By then, Decca was starting to resemble a dusty civil service. Still headed by its 64-year-old founder, its corridors were a curious mix of gentlemen executives and Soho hustlers who'd wangled their way onto the payroll.

Another eye-witness is Andrew Loog Oldham, at the time a teenage PR agent who'd just done some press work for The Beatles. Carrying the demo of his new discovery, a six-piece R&B group called The Rollin' Stones, Oldham walked into Decca and was struck by "the staid atmosphere of the Albert Embankment headquarters, with its uniformed doormen; a direct elevator to Sir Edward; the Tuesday 10am singles meeting where many fates were decided; and Tony Barrow in the press office turning out Beatles PR once Decca had shut for the day, using Decca envelopes and postage stamps." Across town, "The West Hampstead recording studios looked from the outside like a reform school for wayward boys, which, once Billy Fury arrived, in some ways it was!"

UNSMILING MISCREANTS

With England fully gripped by Beatlemania, poor Dick Rowe then agreed to Oldham's brass-necked demands. He signed The Rollin' Stones to a production deal, a tactic inspired by Oldham's pill-fuelled conversations with Phil Spector. The joke was, the baby-faced Oldham was too young to sign the contract. However, "Once *I Wanna Be Your Man* had cracked the Top 10," Oldham explains to *Long Live Vinyl*, "I could do pretty much what I wanted under a contract my mother had to sign on my behalf." Barely 18 but devilishly streetwise when it came to image creation, Oldham added the missing 'g' to Rollin' but insisted that no band name or title appear on The Rolling Stones'

The Moody Blues were unlikely prog-rock pioneers

second, eponymous breakthrough album of 1964. Even his choice of sleeve photo set a precedent for what he describes as "that just-out-of-bed, fuck-you look."

"The Stones were in one studio," remembers Tony Meehan, an in-house Decca producer. "And I was in another doing some mixing. They looked sort of wild, like beatniks. They were having great trouble tuning up. And I said to Andrew, 'That's out of tune'. He looked at me and just laughed – his inimitable sense of anarchy. He said, 'Yeah, it's great, isn't it?' He couldn't give a shit… It was almost like punk." Very much the original bad boys who would inspire The Who, The Yardbirds, The Small Faces, Led Zeppelin and a whole lineage of noisy, unsmiling miscreants (arguably all the way to The Clash and Blur), the Stones broke England throughout 1964 while The Beatles were off conquering America. They soon caught up, hitting number one in America twice in 1965 with *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* and *Get Off Of My Cloud*.

"THE WEST HAMPSTEAD RECORDING STUDIOS LOOKED LIKE A REFORM SCHOOL FOR WAYWARD BOYS"

ANDREW LOOG OLDHAM

Also for Decca, Oldham was producing Marianne Faithfull and his own folly, The Andrew Oldham Orchestra, whose glorious 1965 cover of *The Last Time* provided the hook to The Verve's *Bittersweet Symphony*, 30 years later. "So much depended on the arrangers of the day," explains Oldham. "Choosing the right key and the actual arrangement was make-or-break." Inspired by Burt Bacharach, Phil Spector, Bob Crewe and Motown, Oldham was the first to make full use of Decca's classical production lines. Although he wasn't a musician, his personality was bigger than any conductor's baton. "It was simply a case of 'Make it cheerful, Ivor', or 'Moody Ivor, go moody!'"

Although the field widened rapidly though the mid-60s, The Rolling Stones remained Decca's blockbuster act. In the UK, they notched up a total of 17 Top 10 singles during their Decca years (1963-69) nine of which were number ones. In the US in the same timeframe, they scored 12 Top 10 hits, five of which reached No. 1.

Only The Beatles sold more records, but because the Stones were on a far superior deal, it was Andrew Loog Oldham who got to swan around London in a Rolls Royce, the 20-year-old manager of the Stones and the proud owner of Immediate, the first of the hip London indie labels.

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY

As Pete Townshend puts it, "The Stones finally cemented the huge fucking wall that we wanted to build between the previous generation and everybody who was to follow." Throughout 1965, the march of the youngsters intensified. "I liked working in Decca's West Hampstead studios," explains Shel Talmy, "but I chose to exorcise my independent producer status after Dick Rowe and his A&R group passed on the first two bands I brought in: Manfred Mann and Georgie Fame. When I took The Kinks to Pye, it pretty much curtailed my working relationship with Decca. So, when I signed The Who to my own production company, I felt obligated to offer them to Decca first. But they turned them down also. So I went to New York and met with the heads of American Decca, who I was told were open to do deals.

"The irony is, my Who records were released in England on Brunswick, the Decca sub-label for American releases." That's right folks, if you've ever wondered why a 60s sledge hammer like *My Generation* didn't get the official Decca stamp, now you know. They had to break in through the back door.

Turning down The Who in 1965 was probably a bigger blunder than not hearing the hidden genius of the pre-Ringo Beatles. The joke is, even with all his mistakes, Dick Rowe might still have been England's most successful ever talent spotter. "Dick Rowe was very American-oriented," remembers Talmy. "He was one of the few label execs who knew what was happening in the US."

On closer inspection, it turns out that Rowe took the bullet for a collective mistake. "The story I heard at the time," says Talmy, "was that Dick gave (in-house producer) Mike Smith the option of which band to sign and record;

David Bowie's talent was undeniable, it was just that "he sounded like 'bloody' Anthony Newley"

The Tremeloes or The Beatles, and you know which one he chose!" And anyway, as Andrew Loog Oldham rightly adds, "So might you, too; on the first day of the year, listening to Paul warble *Til There Was You*."

A rummage through Decca's vast catalogue throws up plenty of hard evidence. Classics such as *Tobacco Road* by The Nashville Teens, *She's Not There* by The Zombies; *It's Not Unusual* by Tom Jones and *Baby, Please Don't Go* by Them ooze the raw, fizzy R&B sound that Dick Rowe looked for. As for clairvoyance, Decca's vault is unbeatable for obscure flops by future stars as diverse as Marc Bolan, John Mayall, Small Faces, The Moody Blues and others. Study the small print and Decca's studio was a giant incubator for rookie musicians and producers like Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Robert Fripp, Denny Cordell, Mike Vernon and Tony Visconti.

DERAM DERAM

Then came the Deram sub-label, launched in 1966 under the watchful eye of Hugh Mendl, originally a classical producer. The plan was to blow the minds of younger listeners with their Deramic sound system – a hi-fi stereophonic technique Decca already used for recording orchestras. Given trippy sleeves and lush arrangements, Deram became the hot new brand that launched an impressive crop of time-bomb signatures: Cat Stevens, The Move, Procol Harum, Ten Years After, even an exceedingly underripe David Bowie.

From the word go, the bemused producers of Bowie's debut LP knew they were dealing with an interesting flop. "He sounded like bloody Anthony Newley," gasped Gus Dudgeon, in reference to the novelty London singer, famous for his wide-boy drawl, powerful vibrato and wacky lyrics. "It bothered Mike Vernon and me because we'd say, 'Bowie's really good and his songs are fucking great, but he sounds like Anthony Newley'. I was an engineer at the time and I didn't know if it was a plus or a minus, but it felt like it was possibly a minus. But he did it so well that it was really rather good!"

As it was happening, the pinnacle of the Deram formula had to be The Moody Blues. Backed up by a full orchestra and fronted by a talented new songwriter named Justin Hayward, The Moody Blues found the success on Deram that had eluded them as an R&B band on the regular Decca imprint. Their 1967 concept album *Days Of Future Passed* proved to be the genre-breaking step into progressive rock. Its anthemic lead song, *Nights In White Satin* snowballed into such a pomp-rock classic, that even a 1972 reissue hit No. 1 in America, Canada and France.

Within 18 months of Deram's foundation, EMI and Philips launched their own hippie sub-labels, Harvest and Vertigo respectively. It's no coincidence either that between 1967 and 1969, London burst with indie labels. Robert Stigwood, manager of Cream, formed Reaction. Mike Vernon, the Decca producer, formed Blue Horizons, the label behind early Fleetwood Mac. Animals producer Mickie Most started RAK. Jethro Tull and Ten Years After managers Terry Ellis and Chris Wright formed Chrysalis. Tony Stratton-Smith, co-manager of The Who, formed Charisma. Chris Blackwell, the manager of the Spencer Davis Group, turned his existing Island import

Small Faces released two albums on Decca before moving on

Pre-breakthrough Thin Lizzy were signed to Decca in 1971

KING COLLECTION/PHOTOSHOT/GETTY MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

Andrew Loog Oldham was the Stones' manager when they signed to Decca

business into a proper rock label for Traffic. All these indies, much like the pirate radios broadcasting from the North Sea ships, felt they were catching up with America.

But it was Decca who'd already set the precedents in England by handing out the most opportunities to the very youngest. In contrast, arch rival EMI was painfully slow to open its doors and purse strings to semi-independents and production deals. Even George Martin and The Beatles had to fight to get their AIR and Apple production companies. Behind the mythology, George Martin raged all the way to his grave about the tight-fisted culture inside EMI that Ringo Starr himself summed up with the image of the padlock on the Abbey Road canteen fridge.

TURNIPS & PEARLS

Thanks to its business-friendly founder, Decca never lost the adaptable, can-do spirit that had made it the renaissance label of the Great Depression. Decca had always been the most American of the British majors and yet, it never lost what was so politely English.

"I still see Decca in a very positive light," says Andrew Loog Oldham, who recognises today how much its old-school gentlemen turned out to be a class above the smooth-talking sharks he found in New York. In the late 60s, as both the business and the drugs grew out of control, Oldham was punished severely for his youth and naivety. His mother's signature was no match for his own lawyer, the notorious Allen Klein, who walked off with the Stones, the copyrights, and somehow, three of The Beatles as well.

Sir Edward Lewis turned 70 in 1970, the year Decca lost The Rolling Stones to Atlantic. He continued running the label, but like his own health, the new decade witnessed the company's rapid decline. Despite some promising new finds, such as Savoy Brown and Thin Lizzy, Decca stuck with its aging roster and went back to being a mostly classical label. Just days after Sir Edward's death in 1980, everything was sold to Polygram, the Dutch major that later morphed into Universal.

Although the trademark lived on, Decca died with its founder. To this day, its deliciously succinct logo will always be synonymous with three giant events: The Great Depression, World War II and The Swinging Sixties. Cynics may say that Decca was just another mainstream behemoth, shooting blindly in all directions, turning out 10 times more turnips than pearls. The same, however, could be said of any major, or indeed any large indie. In music, it always comes back to right time, right place and lasting resonance.

And on that score, Decca might just be the coolest of its kind. If the old idiom of catching "lightning in a bottle" is the name of the game, Decca brilliantly documented the lowest and highest moments of the 20th Century, actually affecting how history turned out for the better. ●

"THE STONES WERE IN ONE STUDIO, I WAS IN ANOTHER. THEY LOOKED SORT OF WILD, LIKE BEATNIKS"
TONY MEEHAN

THE DECCA PUB QUIZ

1 Name the sixth original Rolling Stone who, following their signing to Decca in 1963, was demoted by band manager Andrew Loog Oldham to the position of road manager and studio pianist.

2 Famous for swing classics such as *Moonlight Serenade* and *In The Mood*, name the Decca trombonist and band leader who died flying over the English Channel in 1944 while on his way to perform to American troops in Northern France.

3 Name the 1944 hit in which Billie Holiday describes wartime fear and separation with the famously risqué line: "I go to bed with the prayer you'll make love to me".

4 On the 1965 No. 2 hit single *Baby, Please Don't Go* by Belfast R&B group Them, name the session guitarist called in by Decca's producers to record on the track?

5 Released in December 1966, name the Cat Stevens No. 2 hit in which all office workers get for lunch is "a cup of cold coffee and piece of cake".

6 Name the original group from Birmingham whose 1966 debut single was *Night Of Fear,* and whose surviving members, Roy Wood and Bev Bevan, went on to form ELO with Jeff Lynne in 1970.

7 In April 1967, a hit song called *Release Me* by a curiously named Decca crooner prevented The Beatles' double-A side single *Strawberry Fields/Penny Lane* reaching No.1 in the UK charts. Name him.

8 In June 1967, the day that *Sgt. Pepper* reached No. 1 in the UK album charts, a Deram 7" by a hitherto unknown group hit No. 1 in the UK singles charts and remained there for six weeks, becoming the unofficial anthem of the Summer of Love. Name both the song and the artist.

9 Topping the Billboard Hot 100 in August 1969, but not appearing on the accompanying album, *Let It Bleed*, can you name Decca's last Rolling Stones U.S. No. 1 single.

10 In November 1972, Irish rock group Thin Lizzy released their first UK top 10 hit single, a revamped cover of a traditional song that Decca did not include on the accompanying album, *Shades Of A Blue Orphanage.* Name the song.

ANSWERS: 1 IAN STEWART, 2 GLENN MILLER, 3 LOVER MAN (OH, WHERE CAN YOU BE)?, 4 JIMMY PAGE, 5 MATTHEW AND SON, 6 THE MOVE, 7 ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK, 8 A WHITER SHADE OF PALE - PROCOL HARUM, 9 HONKY TONK WOMEN, 10 WHISKY IN THE JAR

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Punk picture sleeves still get **Mark O'Shaughnessy**'s heart pumping, but, a quick word of warning, make sure you store them correctly

My interest in collecting 7" records started at a very young age. My first purchases were Slade's *My Friend Stan* and The Sweet's *Teenage Rampage* – bought together in the autumn of 1973 as an eager nine-year-old schoolboy from a now long-forgotten 'local' record shop in Birmingham.

I can still remember the custom sleeves they came in. The Sweet one was in the RCA 'clouds' design custom bag and the Slade was in the classic red/black Polydor house sleeve. Every time I see those records it reminds me of that fateful day when I first caught the 7" collecting bug. Let's face it, most record buyers bought 7" singles in those days and sales massively outstripped albums.

It wasn't long before I'd amassed a sizeable collection of 7"s and most of the big pop stars and bands of the day were represented. Even then, I was aware these records should sit in their correct sleeves. Be that a picture sleeve or the correct label bag, as many 7" records were then issued in 'company' sleeves.

It was only really when punk came along that 7" picture sleeves became really important. Punk was as much about image as it was the music. I can recall clearly the shivers down my spine I'd feel when visiting Inferno Records on Saturday mornings to see which new punk 7"s had come in. Oh my good God! If any one thing completely encapsulates my whole obsessive record collecting being, it was punk picture sleeves.

They flooded out in 1977/78. A huge deluge of primary colour, bold graphics, DIY ethos, coloured vinyl, double packs, limited editions and shaped discs. This commerciality was initiated by punk kicking down so many doors when it exploded in 1976. Record companies were quick to latch onto the commercial possibilities and we collectors were faced with a plethora of multiple issues, different sleeves and various coloured vinyl conundrums when we went into record shops back then, it was a visual revelation, as if the dull grayscale had been lifted and replaced by a kaleidoscope of incredible visual imagery.

Early examples that spring to mind are The Damned's *Love Song*, which came in four different pic sleeves and also a red vinyl issue. Damned devotees HAD to have ALL of the different variations, with the rarest and most desirable of the four being the "Vanian sleeve", as Dave was undoubtedly the coolest member of the band. Record companies deliberately held back certain issues and variations, ramping up the collectabilty and fuelling life-long obsessions in young vinyl nerds like your humble narrator.

Another big favourite of mine were X-Ray Spex, and they represented a huge collecting opportunity. Their first single, *Oh Bondage Up Yours,* was pressed in a stunning dayglo orange and black sleeve with Poly's face staring back at you (first 5,000), and also on a 12". They went on to release most of the Spex's subsequent 7"s on coloured vinyl and their market value is only going one way.

Punk is one of the most valuable collecting areas in the market

I distinctly remember the disappointment I felt when some big punk bands of the era continued to release 7" singles without pic sleeves. Why?! The Ramones were one such band, but they also provided us with one of THE RAREST 7" pic sleeves of all. The UK picture sleeve of *Blitzkrieg Bop,* withdrawn very quickly by Sire due to the Nazi/Far Right connotations of the song title. Very few got out, as they were quickly recalled and all were destroyed. We recently had one in store. It flew out at £250 and the sleeve was literally falling apart.

A good pointer for Punk 7" collectors is to be very wary of the material used on those early picture sleeves, as it was often Rizla-thin, low-quality paper. Unless stored correctly, these sleeves will 'knife' (when a 7" seam splits due to internal pressure from the record inside leaning into the internal seam and causing those seams to split). Worst case scenarios are when all three closed seams are split, usually in the middle, as this is the point where paper and vinyl meet.

The Sex Pistols' *God Save The Queen* Virgin 7" picture sleeve was notorious for this, as was The Clash's *White Riot*. Values tumble when this problem occurs, so take my tip and store the record outside of the sleeve. Remember, punk remains one of THE most valuable collecting areas in the whole vinyl market. If you do have any original punk 7"s in the loft, go and get them out, play them and give them your love. And before you put them away again, make sure they are in plastic sleeves 'cos you just never know when you might need to cash them in. ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Resolution Records in Bath and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

TALKING SHOP

Lion Vibes

BRIXTON

Brixton Market used to be a vinyl mecca, especially if reggae was your cup of darjeeling, but the number of specialist stores in the South London hotspot has dwindled and now just one remains: Lion Vibes. **Will Simpson** investigates

The history of Lion Vibes is somewhat convoluted. There has been a record shop in its space in the Granville Arcade since the early 80s. Originally, it was owned by reggae legend Alton Ellis and punningly named Alltone. Later, it became Music Temple and ran until 2015, which is when Lion Vibes, at that point an online-only retailer, took over the premises.

Lion Vibes itself was launched in the early 90s by owner Matt Downs, initially as a stall near Brixton station selling CDs and vinyl from Jamaica. Current manager Ben Bell takes up the story: "At that point, Matt had started going to Jamaica to produce his own music. While he was there, he would always get people offering him records and he'd always say 'no'. Then, after thinking for a while, he changed his mind and started bringing back some second-hand records. Eventually, he launched a website in the late 90s – it was one of the first purely reggae online stores."

Meanwhile, Bell was a white musician growing up in leafy Andover, a drum 'n' bass and dubstep devotee who eventually alighted on their source genre and fell head over heels. "I was 16 when I heard a King Tubby dub and thought, 'what the hell is that?' I thought it had come out last year. I just loved the rawness of it. It spoke to me. Its heaviness shocked me."

Ben started collecting and producing reggae himself. Eventually, his path crossed with Downs, who told him about his plan to extend Lion Vibes' online presence to the high street and open a shop specifically to push new vinyl. "He didn't want it to be some oldies shop, he really wanted it to be all of this," Ben explains, gesturing towards the pristine 7-inches lined up behind the counter. "Unfortunately, you can't just sell new reggae music in this day and age – there's just not enough people buying it – so we have an enormous range of second-hand records."

Since opening, the store has developed into a nerve centre for British reggae. "It's a place where people can come who are like-minded. On a Saturday, the counter is surrounded by people. If you looked inside and saw them talking you'd think they were talking about Brexit – you know, the seriousness with which they talk about music in here!

"I have learned so much from my customers and it's important to have a physical space where you can come if you're into this music and shoot the breeze. The amount of times I have put producers in touch with singers I have met in here… it's like a watering hole."

PRESSING ISSUES

It's partly because of spaces like Lion Vibes that the UK scene is quietly flourishing; things have shifted hugely within the genre since the millennium. For one thing, there is no new vinyl coming out of Jamaica these days. The last pressing plant on the island closed in the late 2000s – all music produced on the island is now digital. When Ben guides us through the new releases, he picks out their origin: France, Spain, the US and UK, rather than the Caribbean. "There's no problem sourcing new reggae," he confirms. "One of the great things about the shop is that we get people in here who are unaware that new reggae is being made, and because you're face to face with

DUB
DUB

INDIA
ARTERIA
PAUL'S NORMAL

LionVibes
REGGAE ★ VINYL ★ HEAVEN
89
SATURDAY
80's AND 90's LP's AS FACE
ALL £3
PHEW
White

KING
DUB
HORACE AND
DANCE HALL VOL.1

them you then have a chance to play it and sell it to them, which is a lot harder to do online."

The backbone of the store's customer base is still the generation of punters who were first bitten by the vinyl bug back in the 1970s. "On Saturday mornings, it's still rammed with all those guys. We have some customers who have been going to a record shop every Saturday since they were 12 and there's no way they're stopping now. You'd think there'd be nothing else for them to buy, but there is.

"There's also quite a lot of people like me – white 20-somethings. Then a huge part is American and European customers. We get soundsystem owners from Europe coming over here for one reason only: buying records. They save up for six months, go to every record shop in London and buy big time, and those people are great customers. We love them. The rest is everyone from 16 to 75; everyone from teenagers to random Swedish grannies buying dub."

OLD VS NEW

Brixton itself has changed much in the past decade or so, which leads us to the thorny issue of gentrification and how the store fits into what is a rapidly changing area. Ben takes a deep breath – for a white guy from Hampshire, it's clearly a touchy subject. "There is still a lot of real Brixton here," he considers. "The people you see queuing for £15 breakfasts? They don't tend to be our customers. We like to think of ourselves as the people who are keeping a thread of that old Brixton going, keeping music playing in this market because it would be really sad if it didn't have a reggae store."

In many ways, Lion Vibes is quietly going about its business just as the store on this site always has. According to Ben, the vinyl revival has barely touched it. "When I see a lot of the top-selling records, it's things like Led Zep reissues. In terms of the direct effect it's had on us? Zilch really. You get a lot of people coming in going, 'vinyl's big now isn't it?' And you go,

'no, it's roughly the same as it's been for the last few years'. After 2007, it descended from presses of 1,000 to an average of 250-300 and sometimes not even selling that. But it's good that people are at least aware of vinyl now. For us, it's just important that there's another generation to pick up the slack."

Neither has Record Store Day provided quite the overwhelming boost that it has for other stores. "It's not at the same level as other shops here, just because of the variety of stock they sell compared to us," Ben explains. "It's still a really fun day, though. The last few years we've been sponsored by Wray & Nephew, so the rum is flowing. We turn the music up, put the mic on and yeah we do a lot better than on any other day of the year. To be honest, all the negativity about it just bores me slightly. I know there is an argument that it clogs up the pressing plants, but I personally think it's great."

As important as Record Store Day are the events the store runs. They have a regular night called Selector Thursdays, where punters are free to come down and spin their own selection of tunes, the best winning a prize. Plus there are the signing sessions: recent visitors have included Chronixx, Chase & Status and Adrian Sherwood. The latter is one of the store's more famous customers, alongside such icons as Ken Boothe and Horace Andy, though Ben remembers the

> **Everyone from 16 to 75. From teenagers to random Swedish grannies buying dub**

time the *Curb Your Enthusiasm* actor Jeff Garlin turned up and bought their entire second-hand albums section: "What a customer! In a way, it was great, but then we suddenly didn't have any stock for the rest of the week…"

This is one of the downsides of being a specialist. "In some ways, it's totally bonkers," Ben shrugs. "Do we lose a lot of sales? 100%. On Record Store Day, I fielded about 200 calls for the *Mighty Boosh* album. We do shoot ourselves in the foot, in a way.

"Thousands of times, we've asked ourselves whether we should diversify. The nature of this kind of retail is you often have really quiet days during the week, when the tumbleweed is blowing around. It can get really boring standing here, and yeah you do question yourself, 'what are we doing?'. Then you have a great weekend and think, 'I'm happy with what we're doing here'."

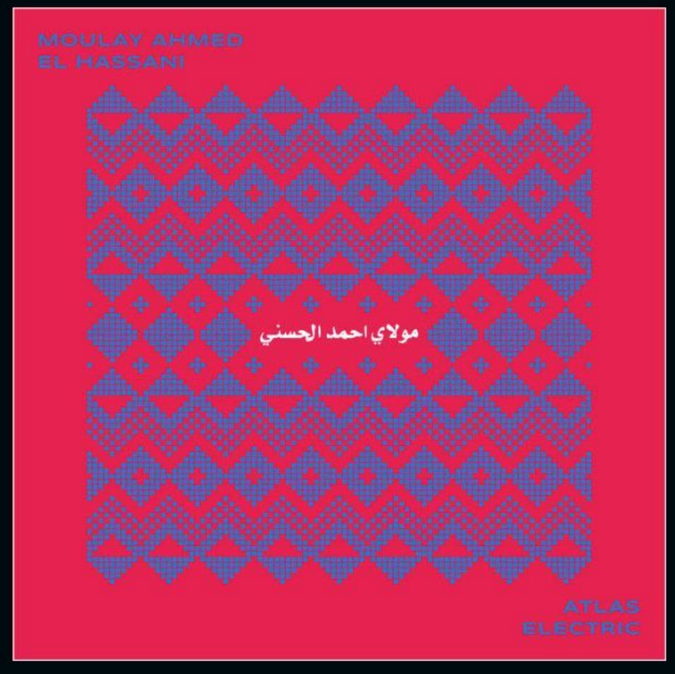
Occasionally, the shop will be packed – one of those times being the day late last year when reggae was added to the list of cultural traditions accorded World Heritage status by UNESCO. "BBC, ITV and Channel 4 all turned up to film in the day. Plus that was the day Mafia & Fluxy were down here as well. We were on *The One Show* and *Channel 4 News* that evening, which was really cool to see. You get a certain kind of customer come in after those events – and they don't usually buy."

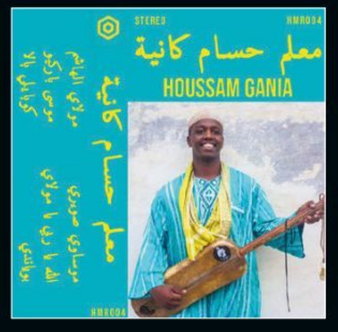
For the moment, Downs and Bell are sticking to their specialist guns. "For me, I don't really see the point of that kind of general shop these days," the manager suggests.

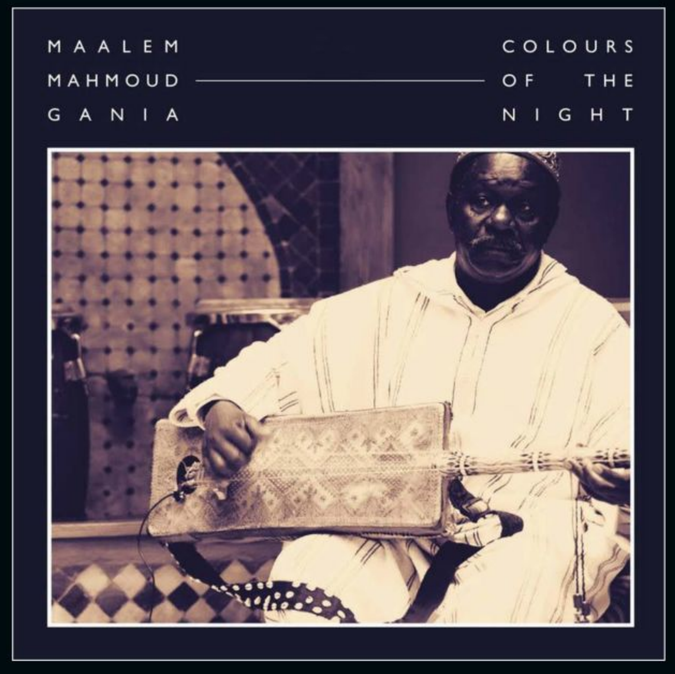
"The other thing is none of us really have the knowledge outside of reggae to really be able to do it. I think you really need to have an intimate knowledge to stock a place and I wouldn't want to compromise on that. Here, everyone who works behind the counter knows their stuff inside out, and that's the way we like it. I think that's one of the main reasons why we've survived. People trust our knowledge." ●

Hive Mind Records

Thanks to the enthusiasm of its founder, the reissue catalogue of Brighton's Hive Mind Records is growing steadily. **Chris Parkin** talks Gnawa trance, free jazz and punk bands from Darlington







"If I want to release an album by a punk band from Darlington or ancient ritual trance music from Nepal, then I will." So declares the founder of Hive Mind Records, Marc Teare. And he's not messing around. The Brighton label's tiny catalogue already embodies the boundary-defying outlook employed by the most exciting imprints.

"When I was growing up in the 80s, it felt important to belong to a tribe; whether you were a punk or a goth or a B-boy or whatever, the music you were into helped define you," Teare says. "Music culture feels more fragmented or kaleidoscopic now. Why confine yourself?"

Why, indeed. In 2008, Teare started blogging about "obscure" music and straight away found an audience for his esoteric recommendations, including regular visitor Brian Eno. Buoyed by his blog's success, Teare decided to release the debut album by Brazilian guitarist Rodrigo Tavares, and followed it up with his first reissue – *Colours Of The Night*, the final recordings by Gnawa trance master Maalem Mahmoud Gania.

"I first heard Gnawa trance music in about 1992 when a friend made me a tape of Paul Bowles' recordings," says Teare of this deep, hypnotic music. "I fell for it in a big way. I went to Morocco in 2003 with my partner and our kids, and in Essaouira we heard Mahmoud Gania everywhere. I came back with a bunch of CDs and tapes."

Teare witnessed a five-hour set by Mahmoud Gania at the Essaouira Gnawa Festival and, a few years later, decided to release music by an artist who had so transfixed Pharoah Sanders and Jimi Hendrix. The Gnawa master died in 2015, but Teare made contact with Mahmoud Gania's eldest son "through Facebook using Google Translate" to arrange the international reissue of his bewitching final album. He's stayed in touch with the family ever since.

> **"I first heard Gnawa trance music in 1992. I fell for it in a big way"**

Teare followed that up with *Atlas Electric*, a double LP of recordings made from 2006-14 by Moroccan chaabi innovator Moulay Ahmed El Hassani. "He couldn't understand why an Englishman, with no French or Arabic, would be interested in his music," says Teare, who paid El Hassani a visit in the Atlas Mountains to explain. Then came Hive Mind's biggie: the recent, double 45rpm LP reissue of free-jazz guitarist Sonny Sharrock's 1994 album *Ask The Ages*.

"I suppose I'm a bit of a chancer," jokes Teare. "I was working in a record shop in Newcastle when *Ask The Ages* first came out, but I only ever had a dodgy tape copy. It's one of those albums that stuck with me and I wanted a copy on vinyl, so I got in touch with Bill Laswell. I'm not sure if there was any competition, but he did say he thought it was a good opportunity to help out a fledgling label."

Teare dreams of dropping hours from his day job to concentrate on Hive Mind, but for now he's slowly building a catalogue to wow major figures like Laswell. Later this year, Teare will reissue Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe's Nigerian highlife classic *Osondi Owendi*, plus a new album of far-out, avant-garde cumbia. Fans of Darlington punk bands will have to wait a little longer. ●

Reviews

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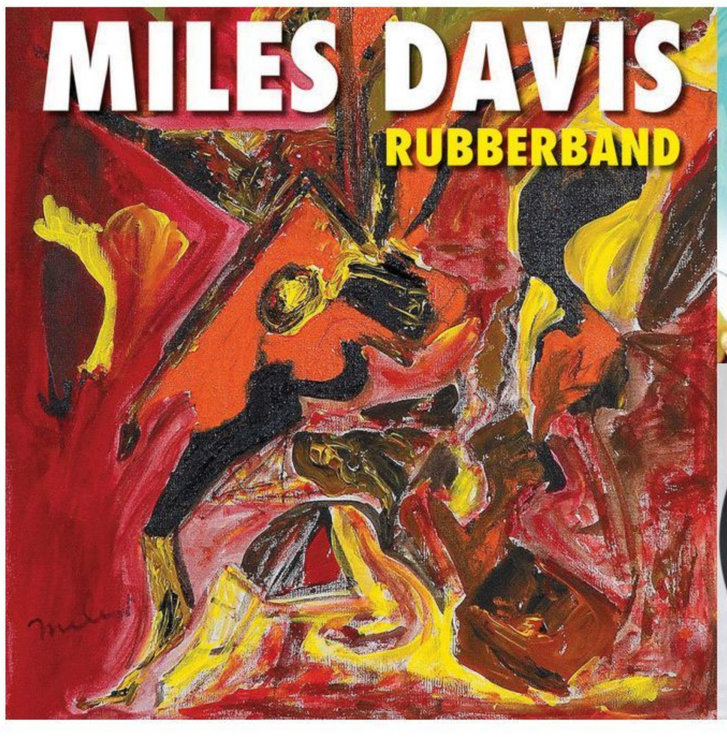

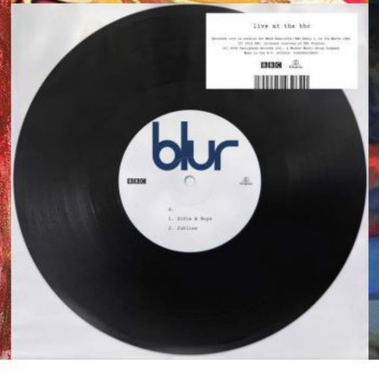

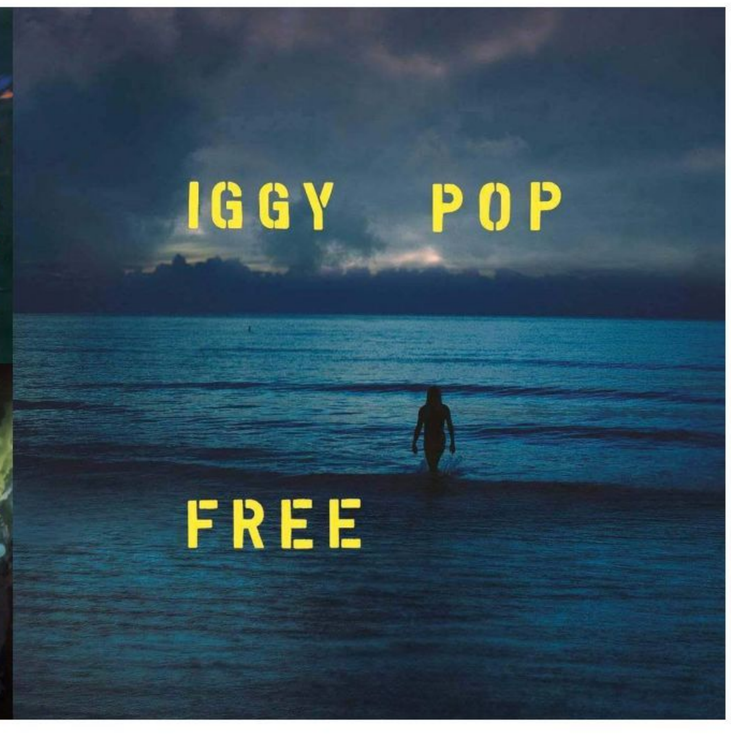

The Beatles

ABBEY ROAD (ANNIVERSARY EDITION)
APPLE/EMI

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The Beatles' final masterpiece gets its inevitable 50th anniversary reissue with two discs of extras. **John Earls** reminds us that in the end the love you take is equal to the love you make

THE EXTRAS

DISC 2

I Want You (She's So Heavy) (Trident Recording Session and Reduction Mix); Goodbye (Home Demo); Something (Studio Demo); The Ballad of John and Yoko (Take 7); Old Brown Shoe (Take 2); Oh! Darling (Take 4); Octopus's Garden (Take 9); You Never Give Me Your Money (Take 36); Her Majesty (Takes 1-3); Golden Slumbers/Carry That Weight (Takes 1-3) / Medley); Here Comes The Sun (Take 9); Maxwell's Silver Hammer (Take 12)

DISC 3 – SESSIONS

Come Together (Take 5); The End (Take 3); Come And Get It (Studio Demo); Sun King (Take 20); Mean Mr Mustard (Take 20); Polythene Pam (Take 27); She Came In Through The Bathroom Window (Take 27); Because (Take 1 Instrumental); The Long One (Trial Edit & Mix 30 July 1969); Something (Take 39 Instrumental Strings Only); Golden Slumbers/ Carry That Weight (Take 17 Instrumental Strings & Brass Only)

Presumably, Beatles fans will get a 50th anniversary boxset of *Let It Be* next year. With Peter Jackson making a tie-in film, it's hard to imagine that the Fabs' farewell box will be at least equal to last year's *The Beatles (The White Album)*. An official release of all those covers jammed out at Twickenham Studios, perhaps? In the meantime, despite *Abbey Road* being recorded last and being the superior album, this year's boxset is something of a halfway house.

In fairness, although it came out before *Let It Be*, by the time The Beatles recorded *Abbey Road* they weren't in the mood to mess about. Unlike the scores of bonus tracks on *The White Album*'s boxset, which was able to call upon *The Esher Demos*, for *Abbey Road* there are only 23 additional recordings. This at least means vinyl buyers get the same number of songs this year, with the 40 total tracks spread across three LPs. But we still don't actually have parity. *Abbey Road*'s £100 Super Deluxe Edition comprises three CDs and the album mixed for a Blu-Ray DVD, with a gorgeous-looking 100-page book full of essays, exclusive photos and other memorabilia. Is the book – which is LP-sized, ferchrissakes – in the £78 vinyl box? No. Is there a consolation 40-page version in the £17 2CD version? Yes. Do Apple realise this is bloody nonsense? Apparently not.

By now, Giles Martin and Sam Okell have perfected their updated mixing techniques. Only a fussy *Octopus's Garden* is overly clinical, with the rest sounding as fresh as could ever be hoped for. *I Want You (She's So Heavy)* growls like the grittiest desert rock, *Sun King* – chirrups and all – is sleepier and more menacing and, while *Something* is impossible to improve on, Martin and Okell certainly don't make it any worse.

Of the two Sessions albums, the first official release of *Goodbye* is the standout track here. Written by Paul McCartney for Mary Hopkin, his home demo has long been bootlegged but never as crisply. It's a gorgeous moment of Macca sweetness, "ba-da-ba"s and all. Future Badfinger hit *Come And Get It* is more familiar from *Anthology 3*, but similarly relaxed in its putative state here. The only other song not already on the parent album is *The Ballad Of John And Yoko*'s B-side *Old Brown Shoe*, the take here full of a belligerence and threat at odds with its throwaway lyrics.

The alternative takes of *Abbey Road*'s own songs are as intriguing as ever. Billy Preston's gnarled organ solo on *I Want You (She's So Heavy)* is stunning and worth the boxset price alone. As with previous demos, you wonder just how The Beatles are able to muck about doing impressions before switching to the sublime *You Never Give Me Your Money* seconds later. Even on dear old *Polythene Pam*, which John Lennon mocks as "sounding like Dave Clark", take 27 is suddenly crashed into as if wanting to give The Who a kicking. The famed *The Long One*, which stitches together Side Two's medley is fascinating, but shows The Beatles were right to break the songs up.

It's not as expansive a boxset as *The Beatles (The White Album)*, but *Abbey Road* was all about concision. The original album has been polished expertly, every alternative take offers fresh insight. It's a bloody shame about the packaging, though.

8

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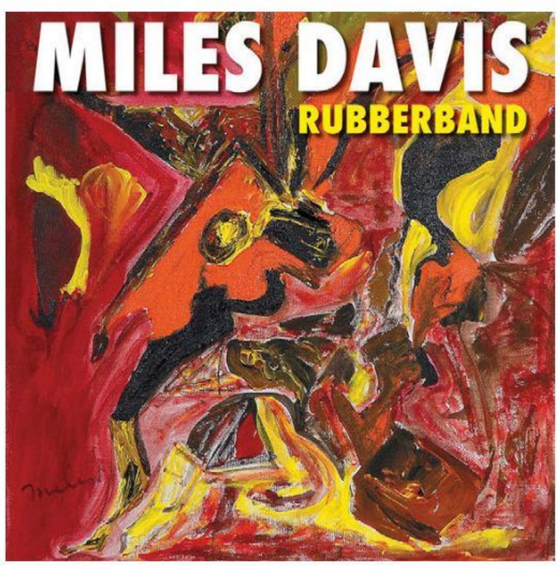
Miles Davis

RUBBERBAND

RHINO

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



Quite why Warner Bros' head of jazz Tommy LiPuma put what was intended to be Miles Davis' debut for the label on ice remains shrouded in mystery. Revisited more than 30 years later by its original producers Randy Hall and Attala Zane Giles, alongside Miles' nephew, Vince Wilburn Jr., who played drums on the unreleased recordings, the rebooted project includes new vocals by the likes of Ledisi and Lalah (daughter of Donny) Hathaway. The former shines on the sunshine-filled near-title track; a wholly successful update of Miles for the new era. There's a distinct Prince influence to *This Is It*'s keyboard textures and guitar licks. *Paradise* boasts sleek Latin rhythms where Miles' contributions lock in with acoustic guitar, a carnival-esque backing and new vocals from Medina Johnson. Hathaway takes the pace down with the sultry *So Emotional* and there's an elastic funkiness to *Give It Up*, Miles cutting through choppy guitars and slap bass. A fuller horn section is added to the mix for *I Love What We Make Together* featuring Randy Hall, and Miles' most intense performance comes on the exploratory *See I See*. Equally forward looking (at that time) is the nine-minute *Echoes In Time/The Wrinkle*, where eerie synth washes battle against Miles' horn. The track's second part returns to more familiar jazz-funk territory. What were you thinking LiPuma? This is a very worthy addition to the exemplary Davis back catalogue. ***Steve Harnell***

9

Various Artists

STUMM433

MUTE

Composed and premiered in 1952, John Cage's *4'33"* is music as the absence of performance, requiring musicians not to play their instruments for the duration of the piece – usually, yes, four minutes and 33 seconds. It's often referred to as four-plus minutes of silence, yet Cage's idea was the piece would consist of the ambient noises where it was performed. A clever-clever idea? Perhaps. Yet one that has long haunted performers and composers, including Mute founder Daniel Miller. Accordingly, when the idea of getting artists to cover *4'33"* as part of Mute's 40th anniversary celebrations came up, Miller was immediately on board. *STUMM433* is impossible to review in any conventional sense, in that most of its 58 tracks consist of background noise. Or in the case of *Fad Gadget*, total silence, a tribute presumably to mainman Frank Tovey, no longer with us. In truth, the project probably makes more sense as highbrow entertainment when you see the visuals different artists have made. There's something hypnotic about listening through, or half-listening as you might to an Eno ambient record, and suddenly encountering a rhythmic pattern (Liars) or a shouted intro (Pink Grease). A collection that doesn't need to exist as a vinyl boxset – including, incidentally, a set of candles intended to answer the question: what is the scent of silence? – yet which makes you infinitely glad someone cares enough to make it so. *Jonathan Wright*

8

RICHARD ROTHMAN

Rodriguez

COLD FACT/
COMING FROM REALITY
UMC

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

"Thanks for your time and you can thank me for mine and after that's said, forget it." These spoken words, captured in a Detroit studio in 1969, close Rodríguez' debut album *Cold Fact*. Oh, the irony. Anyone who has seen 2012 documentary *Searching For Sugarman* will know that "forget it" is exactly what audiences did after it and 1971 follow-up *Coming From Reality* were released. The world, that is, except South Africa where the LPs made him a national star. Light In The Attic have re-released them twice before, but now UMC is putting them out on picture disc and coloured vinyl respectively. The Dylan/Donovan-influenced debut has the stronger songs, but its follow-up shows a singer finding his own voice. ***Ben Wardle*** **9**

Kristin Hersh

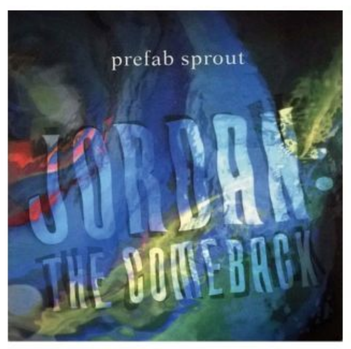
CROOKED
FIRE RECORDS

Kristin Hersh's solution to the notion that people want something to look at while listening to their music back in the vinyl-scarce wilderness of 2010 was to release her eighth solo album as a download code inside a book. Nine years later, Fire Records have given *Crooked* a long-overdue release. It's a fiercely dynamic record, evidence of a troubled talent who deserves to be spoken of in the same revered tones as one-time 4AD labelmates Pixies. Opener *Moan* has a wonderfully ragged guitar solo and the title track addresses Hersh's struggles with bipolarism. *Mississippi Kite* is a potent example of the quiet-loud suckerpunch template Throwing Muses helped to pioneer, its chorus-heavy verses exploding into scuzzy resolution. Far too good to languish simply as a download. *Gary Walker* **8**

Prefab Sprout

REISSUES
SONY LEGACY

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



The surface sheen of Prefab Sprout's early records was glitteringly bright. Built around the sophisticated songwriting of the notoriously perfectionist Paddy McAloon, the band's lush pop made even *Cupid & Psyche*-era Scritti Politti sound a little rough around the edges. As a result, Prefab are more of an acquired taste than their legions of admirers often allow. These remasters, overseen by Paddy and Martin McAloon, prove Prefab reward perseverance. Debut *Swoon* (1984) and third LP *From Langley Park To Memphis* (1988) show McAloon reaching for a sound perhaps only he can hear, but which comes to widescreen fruition with *Jordan: The Comeback* (1990) – a jazz-pop show-tune concept album that deals with faith and fame from a dizzying number of angles. For newbies, double set *A Life of Surprises* serves as a fine introduction. ***Jonathan Wright*** **9**

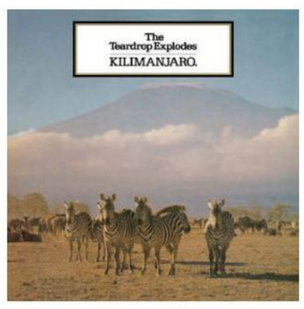
Creedence Clearwater Revival

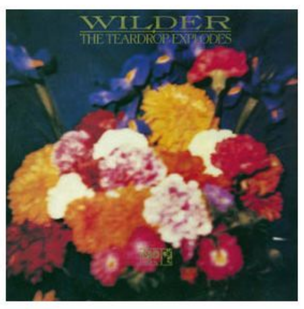
LIVE AT WOODSTOCK
CRAFT

CCR rather dropped the ball by turning down the chance to feature in the Woodstock documentary movie and its accompanying soundtrack. Half a century later, that's rectified with this one-hour unvarnished live recording of their appearance at Max Yasgur's farm. Despite on-stage technical problems, they're on fiery form. John Fogerty is in fine voice on thumping openers *Born On The Bayou* and *Green River*. The rhythm section of bassist Stu Cook and drummer Doug Clifford lock in tight on soul cover *Ninety-Nine And A Half (Won't Do)*, and *Bad Moon Rising* and *Proud Mary* showcase the band's effortless groove, but it's their versions of *I Put A Spell On You*, *Keep On Chooglin'* and *Suzie Q* that mark them out as an extraordinary quartet. *Steve Harnell* **8**

The Teardrop Explodes

KILIMANJARO/WILDER
UMC

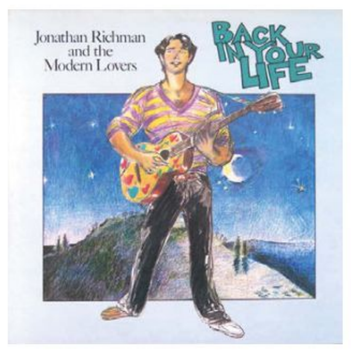




The Teardrops rose to prominence at the vanguard of Liverpool's late-70s neo-psych scene. Marshalled by a leather flying-jacketed Julian Cope, debut *Kilimanjaro* was a jubilant collection of hook-laden tunes, many of which (*Treason*, *Bouncing Babies*) had already been released as 45s on Bill Drummond's Zoo label. With the principal players' heads stuck ever further up their bottoms, follow-up *Wilder* was less coherent. It's not without its moments, with *Passionate Friend* and *Colours Fly Away* both joyous blasts of pop. The best was held for last, with *Great Dominions* an atmospheric triumph. A third album never came and Cope withdrew into his tortoise shell before setting off on his mercurial solo career. ***Gary Tipp*** **8**

Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers

BACK IN YOUR LIFE
MUSIC ON VINYL



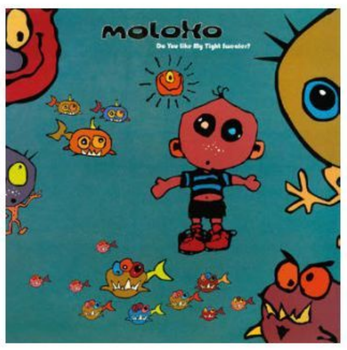
Released in 1979 after Richman's shortlived *Egyptian Reggae* hit period, *Back In Your Life* continues the kids TV presenter meets nasal Buddy Holly theme he kicked off in 1976 with *Jonathan Richman And The Modern* Lovers (not to be confused with the *Roadrunner* et al *Modern Lovers* released the same year). Whether listeners will relish songs like *Buzz Buzz Buzz* ("Buzz, buzz, buzz, goes the honeybee, tweedly tweedly dee goes the bird") or *Party In The Woods Tonight* ("the monsters are cooking up a disgraceful soup") is down to whether they're in touch with their inner child. If, like this writer, they are, then some of Richman's best close harmony recordings await, such as *Lydia*, *I Hear You Calling Me* and self-penned opener *Abdul And Cleopatra*. *Ben Wardle* **7**

Moloko

DO YOU LIKE MY TIGHT SWEATER?

MUSIC ON VINYL

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



Roisin Murphy is rightly now recognised by many as a genius; an Irish Grace Jones who releases brilliant otherworldly disco when you least expect and most need it. But Murphy's old duo with the now-reclusive Mark Brydon deserve reassessing, too. Originally released at the height of Britpop, their 1995 debut actually fits much better into the current fractured pop landscape than it did then. A fantastic cut-and-paste micro-universe, many brief songs cut themselves short just as they're about to take flight. The complete tunes are invariably exotic and addictive, only less successful than Moloko's hit *Sing It Back* due to a clerical error. *Dirty Monkey* is especially out there, as if Captain Beefheart carried on making music into the house era. Music On Vinyl is vowing to reissue all four Moloko albums. A real reason to rejoice. ***John Earls***

9

Joan As Police Woman

REAL LIFE/TO SURVIVE/THE DEEP FIELD

PIAS

Having been a sidewoman for Jeff Buckley and Anthony And The Johnsons, Joan Wasser's emergence in 2006 on her debut album *Real Life* was a revelation. As unapologetically romantic as music got in the noughties, Joan As Police Woman were wonderfully adrift from the post-Strokes indie world, the lyrics as direct as the music was opulent. It developed on *To Survive*, where she even managed to persuade the elusive David Sylvian to return to visceral music on its opening *Honor My Wishes*, setting the tone for its dreamlike abandon. By *The Deep Field*, here as a 2LP set, Wasser's alias was, and still is, a byword for intimacy and the rawest, most soulful rock. Finally back out on (three different coloured) vinyl, Wasser continues to get better. But the Police Woman was mighty as soon as she joined the force. *John Earls*

8

Reverend & The Makers

BEST OF

COOKING VINYL

For the heinous crime of being able to get people bouncing around at summer festivals, Reverend & The Makers are often unfairly dismissed as nothing much more than a lads' band. It overlooks the presence not just of Jon McClure's wife Laura as the Makers' keyboardist and often co-singer, but also their empathy. Divided into two themed albums with one cracking new tune on each, the Uppers – from sturdy hits *Heavyweight Champion Of The World* and *Bassline* to more experimental recent grooves such as *Makin' Babies* – are more familiar. But it's the increasingly rich *Downers* where McClure really shows his mettle. Peaking on the unsettling *Black Flowers*, his usual pithy lyrics are offset by a heart as big as the hulking McClure. Such a compilation is a great chance to discover there's far more going on here than previously realised. ***John Earls***

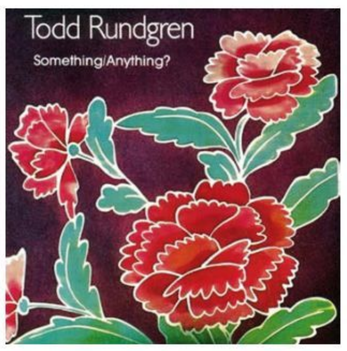
8

Todd Rundgren

SOMETHING/ANYTHING?

MUSIC ON VINYL

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



A few years ago, in an interview with *The Independent*, Todd Rundgren said, "It caused me to crank out songs at an incredible pace. *I Saw The Light* took me all of 20 minutes." What could the multi-instrumentalist, über-producer and human pop conveyor belt have been talking about? Drugs of course, specifically ADHD medication Ritalin, which he started using, along with cannabis and peyote, in the making of his third album. But despite this frenzied intake and output, the quality of the songs on *Something/Anything?* never lets up, and if stylistic variation makes it an open top bus tour of genres (from the Steely Dan meets Led Zeppelin *Black Maria* to the power-pop perfection of *Couldn't I Just Tell You*) it's never less than enthralling. Quite the best place to start if you're new to the wonders of Todd. *Ben Wardle*

9

Nirvana

LIVE AND LOUD

UMC

Originally broadcast by MTV on New Year's Eve 1993, this show was released as a DVD in 2013, but is now out as a vinyl double. Recorded during Nirvana's tour supporting *In Utero*, it's sonically amazing: Pat Smear's full-bodied guitar augmenting Cobain's Mustang and Krist Novoselic's bass fluid and huge. Standouts are the tracks where Kurt gets to sing rather than shout (*Lithium*, *All Apologies* and *Radio Friendly Unit Shifter*), but pre-*Nevermind*-watershed tracks such as *Sliver* and *School* pack even more punch than their studio incarnations. Many in the Seattle crowd that night must have heard the trio squawking out of much smaller PAs only a handful of years before, so this recording is a painful reminder of how quickly Nirvana became world-class and, tragically, how much we all lost the following year. ***Ben Wardle***

8

Stray Cats

RUNAWAY BOYS

BMG

Featuring the first three albums, a fourth disc of rarities, a book and a board game, this boxset promises a genuine night out. The 40 year-old debut sounds the least 1950s, with Dave Edmunds' gritty new wave production, as well as its slightly ill-advised attempt at social commentary on *Storm The Embassy*. Follow-up *Gonna Ball* sees the band showing off their rockabilly chops and is the most successful, while 1983's *Rant n' Rave With The Stray Cats* leans towards caricature despite Edmunds' involvement. The extras disc has some fine tracks, such as *What's Goin Down (Cross That Bridge)*, *Cruisin* and *I Won't Stand In Your Way*, where the band put aside their tribute ethic, spread their creative wings and fly. The included boardgame follows their early rise and ends with a *Rumble In Brighton*. *Ben Wardle*

7

Echo & The Bunnymen
THE JOHN PEEL SESSIONS 1979-1983
RHINO

From the perfect pop-psych of *Crocodiles* to the majestic sweep of *Ocean Rain* via the classic post-punk of *Heaven Up Here* and *Porcupine*, Echo & The Bunnymen's first four albums set the gold standard for guitar-band cool in the 80s. Fellow Liverpool FC supporter John Peel (hence the blood red vinyl) was an early champion and the session tracks that populate this limited edition double-disc collection are for the most part selected from this quartet of gems. In fact, many of the songs were written because a Peel session had been booked and they needed new tracks to fill it, which neatly demonstrates the level of trust that was shared by the band and the much-missed DJ. To that end, many of the songs, including a nascent *Killing Moon*, possess a sparky work-in-progress quality – and are all the more fascinating because of it. ***Gary Tipp*** **8**

Loudon Wainwright III
MORE LOVE SONGS
DEMON

In 1986, Rufus and Martha Wainwright were known only through songs Kate McGarrigle and Loudon Wainwright III – their parents – wrote about them. Their father's early tunes included *Dilated To Meet You* and *Rufus Is A Tit Man*, but *Your Mother And I* sensitively explained their divorce: "Your folks fell in love/ Love's a very deep hole". The children must still weather banjo-driven confessions of failed affairs (*Synchronicity*), tongue-in-cheek, oom-pah regret (*Unhappy Anniversary*) and heartfelt, albeit objectifying, paeans to womanhood delivered with the 'dad humour' that led him to Jasper Carrott's BBC show. Despite such uncomfortable frankness, this Grammy-nominated collection, produced by Richard Thompson, displays all Wainwright's wit and craft, especially on piano ballad *Overseas Call*. *Wyndham Wallace* **7**

Goldie
SATURNZ RETURN
LONDON RECORDS

Having reinvented drum & bass with his debut, *Timeless*, Goldie appeared to have forsaken it with his ambitious 1998 follow-up, *Saturnz Return* – which clocked in at just under the two-and-a-half-hour mark. Challenging opener *Mother*, which shaped the public's cautious response, lasted an hour and was mainly orchestral or ambient, yet was undeniably self-indulgent. It's omitted on this vinyl reissue, but the same was true of *Truth*, on which David Bowie wailed in affected fashion over reversed tapes of Goldie's breathing, and the lengthy *Dragonfly*. Nonetheless, Noel Gallagher's sinister guitars added to *Temper Temper*'s – albeit repetitive – *Firestarter* depravity, and KRS1 distinguished the combative *Digital*. There's also notable diva work on the soulful *Crystal Clear*. Masterpiece or indulgence? It can be such a fine line. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **7**

Sachiko Kanenobu
MISORA
LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Misora represented dreams of creative freedom for Sachiko Kanenobu, and her relocation to America two months before its 1972 release helped her realise them in California with Crawdaddy founder Paul Williams. Musically, she was already there and comparisons with Joni Mitchell are irresistible. Whether for her acoustic guitar on the title track, or the way her voice swoops upwards on *Anata Kara Toku E*, or the multitracked vocals closing *Omae No Hoshii No Wa Nani*. Producer Haruomi Hosono keeps it simple, with understated percussion and jazzy keyboard on *Anata...* and Crosby-ish guitar licks on *Toki Ni Makasete*, while *Aoi Sakana* nods to early Neil Young. But it's *Hayabusa To Watashi*'s free-spirited artlessness that best captures this cult classic's spirit. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

The Pop Group
Y
MUTE

In the late 1970s, post-punk wilfully deconstructed the punk music that came before it; at the forefront of that movement, The Pop Group stretched the existing sonic boundaries so far their debut album could have easily been classified as post-music. Originally released on 20 April 1979, the antagonistic Bristolians' *Y* is a wilfully singular and aggressively radical document of the time that combines discordant funk with skronky free jazz and abrasive dub. The result has never been an easy listen, far from it, but the ambition levels are so wildly off-the-scale as to be hat-tippingly impressive. To mark the 40th anniversary of the album, the band are releasing two limited edition boxsets that include the original album, *She Is Beyond Good & Evil* and two additional albums, *Alien Blood* and *Y Live*, as well as an extensive booklet and art prints. Heady stuff. ***Gary Tipp*** **8**

Various Artists
FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS OST
MUSIC ON VINYL

The soundtrack to the cult classic movie of Hunter S Thompson's gonzo opus returns to vinyl and remains a fittingly odd, slightly disjointed listen when divorced from the film, with Johnny Depp's lysergic dispatches segued between the songs. Raoul Duke's narcotic packing list introduces Brewer & Shipley's *One Toke Over The Line* and it's impossible to hear Tom Jones' *She's A Lady* or *For Your Love* by The Yardbirds without bringing to mind the film's terrified hitch-hiker played by Tobey Maguire. Equally the attorney's bathtub freakout without Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit*. Dylan's *Stuck Inside Of Mobile...* is another high point as things begin to go south for our intrepid reporter. The 21st anniversary edition comes in an individually numbered run of 2,500 with a laser-etched D-side. *Gary Walker* **8**

Pixies

BENEATH THE EYRIE
INFECTIOUS/BMG

Pixies 2.0 serve up a crowd-pleasing collection of alt.rock with more than a hint of the menace of yesteryear. Meanwhile, **John Earls** has his eye on the boxset option

TRACKLIST

1 In The Arms Of Mrs Mark Of Cain
2 On Graveyard Hill
3 Catfish Kate
4 This Is My Fate
5 Ready For Love
6 Silver Bullet
7 Long Rider
8 Los Surfers Muertos
9 St. Nazaire
10 Bird Of Prey
11 Daniel Boone
12 Death Horizon

Three albums into their second incarnation, news of a new Pixies record might not be greeted with the same hysteria as it would have been 30 years ago. That doesn't mean the quality has lessened. *Head Carrier* was a marked step-up from the understandably cautious *Indie Cindy*. *Beneath The Eyrie* continues the upward curve. More than its two predecessors, it knows what people want from Pixies and gives it to them while playing with those expectations. The band make it clear that they'll still go wherever the damn hell they choose.

Lead singles *On Graveyard Hill* and *Catfish Kate* are from the more reliable end of the album: much talk lyrically of "witchy powers" and Joey Santiago's guitars best described as stately, finding band and listener in Pixies' comfort zone. They're both hugely enjoyable, especially Paz Lenchantin's harmonies on *Catfish Kate*, but it's nothing you haven't heard before. It certainly doesn't prepare you for the ferocious assault of *Long Rider* that opens Side Two – here is where Santiago's guitars and Lenchantin and David Lovering's rhythm section are unleashed. Why are Lenchantin and Black Francis growling, "I believe" just under the surface? Lord knows, but it'll feed your nightmares for weeks.

Better still is *St Nazaire*, a relationship breakdown rant that's Pixies' first successful rockabilly riot. Done with in under two and a half minutes, when Francis hollers, "I'm all done talking to you" it's as violent and menacing as Pixies have ever been. Impressive, from a band whose music has been violent and menacing from the start. For the first time since the late 80s, Pixies have got their gang mentality back. The menace is shot through the barely controlled fury of *This Is My Fate* and *Ready For Love*. The former is particularly fascinating, as Francis gleefully intones "Take a drink, it's alright" over Lovering's manic percussion. A reminder: a newly clean Santiago says *Beneath The Eyrie* is the first Pixies album he's recorded sober.

Despite, or probably because of, its superficially cutesy sitcom theme backing, *Bird Of Prey* is even more sinister. As close as Pixies have got to an all-out pop song, its opening line is "Set my broken bones with a twist and a crack". They're not quite ready to join Linda Perry and Greg Kurstin as pop writers for hire, then. Only *Daniel Boone*, five trudging minutes in search of a point, doesn't deserve to rate highly in what Francis wryly calls "The canon of the Pixies".

If the music's not enough, *Beneath The Eyrie* offers one of the most appealing vinyl boxset options of the year. Often, "a second disc of exclusive vinyl" is a couple of demos or remixes of existing songs. Here, there are nine additional songs from the album sessions. It's your chance to compile the definitive Pixies 2019 album, swapping out any duff songs for those on the bonus disc. More than ever, Pixies seem at ease with themselves. Turns out being relaxed doesn't make them any less exciting.

8

TRAVIS SHINN

Bon Iver

I,I

JAGJAGUWAR

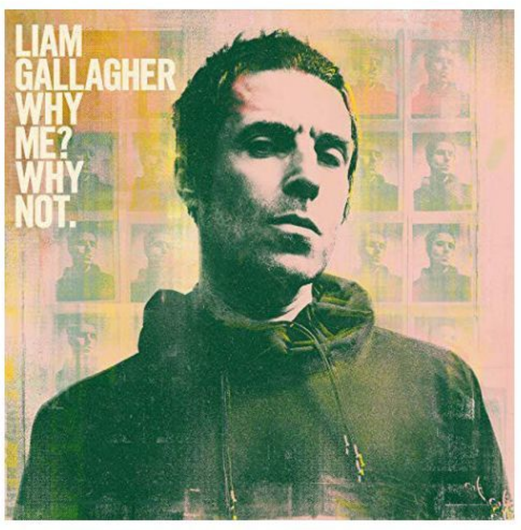
A decade on from the stark, arresting beauty of *For Emma, Forever Ago*, Justin Vernon arrives at album four, having travelled a vast distance. Bon Iver now represents something about as different as possible from the cabin isolation of that debut, an open-door creative amalgam drawing in the likes of James Blake, The National's Aaron Dessner, Wye Oak's Jenn Wasner and Brad and Phil Cook. *I,I* opens with nearly 50 seconds of unintelligible noise before Vernon's scrambled, reverse-Vocoder vocal appears, still "Living in a lonesome way", pulsing electronics, plucked strings, and cacophonous horns producing a shimmering R&B master-muddle. Despite the uneasy opening, we settle into a more orthodox record than 2016's *22, A Million*, the glitchy Auto-Tuned Kanye-isms no longer the defininng theme and Vernon's singular voice allowed to shine. Mid-album, we hit a peak. The icy guitar arpeggio in the opening seconds of *Hey, Ma* ushers in one of the finest pieces of music Vernon has recorded. *U (Man Like)* follows, a sweet piano ballad that stops short of three minutes. *Naeem*, while at times lyrically underdeveloped, is a rousing anthem that positively gallops to its conclusion, and *Marion* is an unspoiled, rustic remnant of Vernon's origins. Elsewhere, things are more opaque, with meaning harder to grasp. *I,I* tells us Vernon still knows where that cabin in the woods is, he's just not interested in returning to it alone. These days, he's the genre-agnostic leader of a new kaleidoscopic commune. ***Gary Walker***

7

Liam Gallagher

WHY ME? WHY NOT.

WARNER



In uncharacteristically humble fashion, Liam Gallagher recently described his music as being like a Sunday roast. Hearty, traditional, you know where you are with it. That's rather selling his new album short, though. While *Why Me? Why Not.* ticks every box that fans will require of it, it's often an ambitious advance from his solo debut. Like *As You Were*, it kicks off with a stomping call to arms – *Shockwave* has all of the snarling swagger that you'd expect from Gallagher Jnr as it clatters into view. The mid-paced likes of *Meadow,* with its George Harrison-aping guitar solo, and the vintage 70s vibes of *Alright Now* recall the lighter moments of Oasis, but on the expansively dramatic title track with its descending strings motif, the 'Jerry Lee Lewis Goes To Burnage' piano pounder *Halo* and quirkily arranged *The River*, the stakes are impressively raised. While most of *Why Me? Why Not.* makes good on Liam's promise to dial up the aggression of his first solo LP, *Now That I've Found You*, complete with cooing backing vocals, could be his poppiest performance to date. For those playing the 'Which one's about Noel?' game, among the many contenders are the emotive *One Of Us* ("You'd said we'd live forever… you were only one of us") and the skewed Smiths-on-steroids closer and album standout *Gone* – the latter even includes a charismatic spoken word section amid some stabbing strings. Nobody plays the scissors, mind you, but there is a recorder solo… *Steve Harnell*

8

TOM BEARD

Iggy Pop

FREE

LOMA VISTA/CAROLINE

After touring *Post Pop Depression*, there was a sense Iggy's career was beginning to wind down. Having previously made peace with his Stooges legacy, he had triumphantly revisited his with-Bowie-in-Berlin years with Josh Homme. What was left to add? Plenty, to judge by *Free*, made in the company of trumpeter Leron Thomas and guitarist/sound artist Noveller. Over skeletal beats and washes of sound, Iggy, his 72 years now brutally evident in his voice, speak-sings contemplations on ageing, life and, as per the title, his need for freedom. Not every track works, but the best material – the jaunty *James Bond*, the haunting *We Are The People* – show Iggy, similarly to his work with Underworld, as an elder statesman going along with the musical flow of well-chosen collaborators. This suits him. It's available on limited blue vinyl, too. ***Jonathan Wright***

6

Belle & Sebastian

DAYS OF THE BAGNOLD SUMMER OST

MATADOR

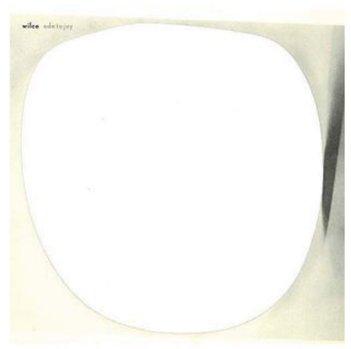
A band named for a French series once a staple of school holiday TV, it's somewhat apposite that Belle And Sebastian should soundtrack Simon Bird's debut film, which focuses on a long summer break. Something of the languid atmosphere of weeks where the days stretch out – lazy days that should be glorious, yet where ennui never seems too far away – courses through the music. The settings here are simpler than those on recent Belle records, pastoral, gentle, folk-tinged, yet that's no bad thing. Helped by the band revisiting three older songs, most notably a fine re-recording of *I Know Where The Summer Goes*, as well as offering new material, there's a sense of Belle And Sebastian nodding back to their own past and finding it has much to offer the future. Lovely. *Jonathan Wright*

8

Wilco

ODE TO JOY

DBPM RECORDS



Wilco's Jeff Tweedy has had a busy couple of years, releasing a pair of solo albums and a memoir during that time, and this latest album feels like a continuation of that productive spell. The slower, more acoustic and languid music Tweedy makes as a solo artist is the fundamental tone on *Ode To Joy*. Slow, shuffling drum beats that march through the record and folk-like acoustic explorations atop. Tweedy's voice, meanwhile, is ever enticing, that perfect blend of sugar sweet and subtle husk. It's not the band's most sonically adventurous album – although the *On The Beach*-esque *We Were Lucky* is a nod to less predictable Wilco days – and it does plod in pace a little bit at times, even if the production hums with a warm glow and the musical accompaniment feels thoughtful, subtle and restrained. ***Daniel Dylan Wray***

7

Jenny Hval

THE PRACTICE OF LOVE

SACRED BONES

On her most accessible work since her earliest days, Jenny Hval shifts from discussion of menstruation on 2016's *Blood Bitch* album to romance and intimacy. Her intellect hasn't dimmed, though: few voices coil around cerebral lyrics with such ease, as she does on *Lions*, where guest Vivian Wang's spoken words question the existence of God; and few are bold enough to namecheck Georgia O'Keeffe and Joni Mitchell before describing *Six Red Cannas* as "tearing up the heavens/ opening the zipper". Félicia Atkinson contributes to *Thumbsucker*'s mystery and synths shimmer on *High Alice*, sparkle on *Accident* and soar on *Ashes To Ashes*, a song about a dream about a song that's not yet been written, which gives Pet Shop Boys a feminine makeover. *Wyndham Wallace*

7

Bat For Lashes

LOST GIRLS

AWAL RECORDINGS

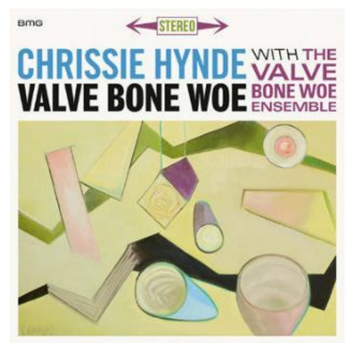
If *Stranger Things*' 80s fetishisation has seduced you, Natasha Khan's fifth might provoke a panic attack, so intense is the impression one's slipped through a portal to Ronald Reagan's California. She's not alone in attempting this, obviously: the album's cover appears to employ the same typeface as fellow 80s fetishists M83's 2005 LP, *Before The Dawn Heals Us* – though it's 2008's *Saturday = Youth*'s neon-lit bombast that *Desert Man* most resembles – and her mannered vocals remind one Aurora and Susanne Sundfør have recently explored similar territory. Still, *Vampires*' atmosphere loudly echoes *Disintegration*-era Cure – though one doubts they'd employ that saxophone – and there are recollections of Eurythmics' *There Must Be An Angel* on *So Good*, while there's something about *Peach Sky* that will have you reaching for T'Pau's *China In Your Hand*. ***Wyndham Wallace***

7

Chrissie Hynde

VALVE BONE WOE

BMG



Though it's only been five years since *Stockholm*, Chrissie Hynde's second solo album has felt a long time coming: *Valve Bone Woe* was inspired by her recording of *Luck Be A Lady* for Frank Sinatra's 1994 *Duets* album. Some covers are reverential (Sinatra's *I'm A Fool To Want You*), others unexpected. *How Glad I Am* nods to Nancy Wilson's unsurpassable 1964 version before soaring into a brassy wig-out, while The Beach Boys' *Caroline No* appears conservatively jazzy, before early hints of space echo augur the dreamy dub excursion ahead. *Absent Minded Me* – from Barbra Streisand's *Funny Girl* – opens romantically but drifts into what could be The Orb, and Charles Mingus' *Meditation On A Pair Of Wire Cutters* receives a dramatically rhythmic overhaul. *Wyndham Wallace*

7

Oh Sees
FACE STABBER
CASTLE FACE

This album title could arguably have been applied to more than a few of Oh Sees/Thee Oh Sees' albums over the years. The band's propensity for teeth-rattling, gut-wobbling, head-melting garage psych is well documented across their extensive and prolific discography. That fecund nature carries on here, with the band releasing a double album. It's a long, sprawling, unravelling beast of an album that goes in any avenue it pleases: acid-fried jams, prog freak-outs and noisy eruptions. It's a wild and unruly record that holds little regard for coherence, structure, genre, pacing or anything else. The result is one that can be exhilarating and unpredictable as often as meandering and patience-testing. If there's one certainty to be taken from this, though, it's that the band couldn't care less and are having a riot. **7**
Daniel Dylan Wray

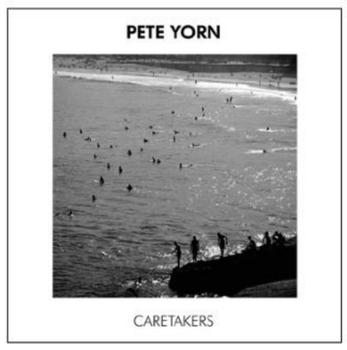
The Monochrome Set
FABULA MENDAX
TAPETE RECORDS

Over the four decades of The Monochrome Set's stop-start history, some things have remained constant. The band have always been arch – and too clever it seems for mainstream acceptance, for all they've influenced the likes of Johnny Marr and Franz Ferdinand. Considering the band's latest LP is a song-cycle based on the 15th-century manuscripts written by Armande de Pange, a companion of Joan Of Arc, that perhaps hasn't changed. But don't expect the bellowing medievalisms of Richard Dawson's *Peasant*. Rather, *Fabula Mendax* is readily accessible, post-punk pastoral lifted by the band's gift for jazz-tinged pop melody and mainstay Bid's warm vocals. Highlights, such as the jaunty *Throw It Out The Window*, abound. A band sounding as vital as they've ever done. **7**
Jonathan Wright

Modern Nature
HOW TO LIVE
BELLA UNION

Jack Cooper is the latest in a long line of British pop sightseers. He explored the minutiae of life in previous project Ultimate Painting and his 2017 solo album *Sandgrown* was all about his hometown of Blackpool. This time out, Cooper and his new wingman, BEAK> synth noodler Will Young, are in new territory, exploring the liminal space between city and country in a series of dreamy, filmic jams that unfurl propulsively. The motorik drumming of Woods' Aaron Neveu provides the forward motion for a journey that flashes through phasing drones, pastoral post-rock and ecstatic flights of sax from Brooklyn psych-jazz man Jeff Tobias. Named after Derek Jarman's essays about Dungeness, an isolated outpost where only a power station intrudes, the urban-rural confluence has never sounded ghostlier. **8**
Chris Parkin

Pete Yorn
CARETAKERS
SHELLY MUSIC



Largely a secret that only US audiences are in on, Yorn has quietly been getting on with releasing his brand of singer/songwriter melodic rock since his 2001 debut *Musicforthemorningafter*. He's collaborated with Scarlett Johansson not once but twice, soundtracked Hollywood movies, as well as supporting Coldplay, and yet remains an enigma in the UK. Not a radical departure from his usual intelligent rock template, this new album contains some excellent tunes such as the Big Star powerpop of *Do You Want To Love Again?*, the R.E.M. meets Elliott Smith *I Wanna Be The One* and the Flaming Lips-like *Try*. Yorn's voice is convincing in its sweet gravelliness and the choruses stick after a couple of listens, but the conventional slickness of the production may continue to keep the hipster-hungry UK media away. **8**
Ben Wardle

WHAT'S ON IN THE SHOP

FRIENDLY RECORDS
BRISTOL

Aldous Harding
DESIGNER
4AD
One of my favourite albums this year, it's pretty much perfect, a truly original record by one of the most original artists around. It's probably her most accessible record to date, yet still strange and beguiling. I've seen her live a couple of times this year and she's as mesmerising live as she is on record.

Beak>
LIFE GOES ON
INVADA
This is on heavy rotation in the shop. The band are friends of mine, but that isn't why I've chosen this! It really is a brilliant EP, full of all the elements that make them one of my favourite bands. You can hear their influences and it still manages to sound unique, like they made the record and then left it too close to the radiator. Weird, warped and HEAVY!

Don Cherry
BROWN RICE
BLUE NOTE
Another record that we've played constantly since its reissue early this year. It's one of those gems that sounds as original today as it did on its release some 40 years ago. I guess it was 'world' music before that was even a thing, with its exploration of both Eastern and Western music traditions. It's a record that feels truly global and one that I'll never tire of listening to.

Blur
LIVE AT THE BBC
PARLOPHONE

Released to mark the 25th anniversary of *Parklife*, this little 10" beauty features four songs recorded exclusively for Mark Radcliffe's late-night BBC Radio 1 show, a month before the career-changing album came out. Parlophone state that the tracks are 'globally' available for the first time, but French fans and Blur completists will recognise this set as the 1994 *Bet Bet Bet* promo CD, which came out exclusively in their territory. It's fascinating to hear the band revelling in current hit *Girls And Boys*, as well as demonstrating their Cardiacs meets Kevin Ayers schtick on less obvious choices *Jubilee*, *Trouble In The Message Centre* and *Lot 105*. Hastily recorded with some clunky overdubs, it's the band's live muscle which shines, as well as how surprisingly central keyboards were to the band's guitar pop.

7

Ben Wardle

Gruff Rhys
PANG!
ROUGH TRADE

There are very few artists that have remained so consistently and perfectly on the verges of pop music as Gruff Rhys. While on occasion the Super Furry Animals man has crossed over into mainstream pop, his folk-tinged obscure voyages have usually remained on the periphery of the outside. His latest solo album is no different, with flashes of infectious melody nestled up alongside more adventurous and peculiar moments. There are stripped-back tender parts, driven by acoustic guitar and livelier sections lifted by brass and skipping electronic beats, as Rhys' gentle yet slightly husky voice hovers above. Sung mostly in Welsh with a brief foray into Zulu, it's a beautifully paced record that results in another charming addition to Rhys' endlessly curious back catalogue.

7

Daniel Dylan Wray

Loscil
EQUIVALENTS
KRANKY

Presumably battered after spending time drumming for Destroyer, Scott Morgan has earned a place over the last two decades in the highest firmament of ambient musicians, which is appropriate, given that his latest was inspired by Alfred Stieglitz's ethereal cloud photographs. This time, he dispenses with melody and beats, though to call these drones would be to imply monotony; these eight tracks morph glacially, albeit often almost imperceptibly, into different structures. The quietly throbbing *Equivalent 3* is particularly beautiful, its high-pitched tones tracing a welter of pretty patterns, while *Equivalent 2* is full of atmospheric hisses and hums and *Equivalent 5* builds slowly towards a heavenly climax. *Equivalent 7*, meanwhile, is so buoyant that it would suit Eno's recent *Apollo* reissue.

8

Wyndham Wallace

Adam Green
ENGINE OF PARADISE
30TH CENTURY RECORDS

Adam Green has been a more active filmmaker than musician in recent years, from the drowsy ketamine-influenced *The Wrong Ferrari* to his own cardboard set version of *Aladdin*. Even this album comes as an accompanying piece to a graphic novel he has written. However, despite Green's variations into other art forms, musically he's back in familiar form here. Sweeping strings and his deep resonant voice collide via his take on baroque pop. There's not quite the same level of pop-leaning numbers that fizz and spark like his early work, nor are single tracks as distinctive by themselves, but there's still an underpinning warmth to the restrained production and a coherent sonic strand that results in this being very much an album, and one that is a bright, breezy yet immersive listen.

7

Daniel Dylan Wray

OUR NEW ALBUM
THE BUILDING
"Imagine me listening to these recordings, IV needle in the top of my hand, headphones blaring," says The War On Drugs guitarist and The Building's main man Anthony LaMarca of a record he made while undergoing treatment for Multiple Myeloma. Its title, *PETRA*, is an acronym of Peace's Eterntal Truth Reveals All. "I always sit by the window. Outside. Free. Not in there. Not with the needle. But out in the woods with my dog. It seems dramatic or tragic, but it's not. I don't see it that way and I don't intend for it to be heard that way. It's just the truth of what was happening in my life while I was recording these songs."

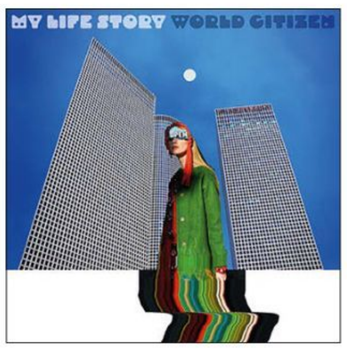
The Building
PETRA
CONCORD RECORDS

A quick follow-up to 2018's acclaimed debut, *Reconciliation*, from The War On Drugs guitarist Anthony LaMarca. A record crafted in the midst of a serious health scare for the Ohio multi-instrumentalist, it carries none of the expansive open-road bombast of his day job band, but is equally affecting. The arrangements are satisfyingly sparing, LaMarca strumming an acoustic guitar and tinkling the ivories, his lyrics nakedly honest and his plaintive vocal lavished in airy reverb. Song titles such as *Transformed*, *Life Half Lived*, *Purifier* and *All Things New* betray the epiphany LaMarca underwent, yet it never feels mawkish. *Warning* rises to insistent stridency and strings sweep around LaMarca's stirring falsetto in the chorus of *Never Was Alone* as he delivers his most powerful work yet.

8

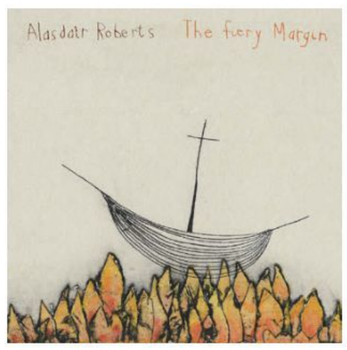
Gary Walker

My Life Story
WORLD CITIZEN
EXILOPHONE



The most flamboyant band of the 90s brought suave and glamour to Britpop with cult classics *Sparkle* and *12 Reasons Why* before a final album in 2000. They've toured intermittently since 2006, but *World Citizen* is their first album since reforming. Singer Jake Shillingford now makes music for TV shows including *Homeland* and *The Grand Tour*. The orchestra has gone but, with only TV writing partner Nick Evans for company, Shillingford is able to recreate the drama of MLS' heyday. *Sent From Heaven* and the title track are uplifting power-pop, Shillingford's vocals still dripping with decadence. The ballads are strangely less successful – *A Country With No Coastline* certainly needs something to make it less wet. But it's a delight to have Shillingford back, albeit with no strings attached. ***John Earls*** **7**

Alasdair Roberts
THE FIERY MARGIN
DRAG CITY



Scottish singer-songwriter Alasdair Roberts has ploughed the folk furrow for some time now, with *The Fiery Margin* his 12th release for Drag City. Roberts' albums tend to alternate between self-penned material and traditional songs, with this occasion being the turn of the former. With the help of Trembling Bells' Alex Neilson, bassist Stevie Jones and Irish violist Ailbhe Nic Oireachtaigh, he sidles gently away from the folk-rock leanings of previous album *Pangs* to reveal a gentle set of intricately crafted fare. A songwriter of some deft substance, at their best his compositions manage to simultaneously shimmer and pack a punch. Multi-layered lead single *The Evernew Tongue*, based on the inspiration of a Medieval Irish account of the mysteries of the universe, sets the tone. *Gary Tipp* **8**

Life
A PICTURE OF GOOD HEALTH
AFGHAN MOON/PIAS

Rampaging out from Hull with 2017's fractious *Popular Music* debut, the punks' politics are more personal this time. It makes for a more affecting world, with singer Mez Green's life as a single dad making *Half Pint Fatherhood* and *Bum Hour* curiously moving under the scabrous, spiky sonics. Aided by producers Luke Smith and Claudius Mittendorfer's jagged minimalism – and Stew Baxter's furious drumming – they're worthy of The Fall on much of the concise mayhem, especially when Green's lyrics are as distinct as his vocals, best described as "conversational yelp". Modern life diatribe *Thoughts* and salvation anthem *Don't Give Up Yet* are as hilarious and addictive as their touring partners IDLES, offset by the simple escapist thrills of *Excites Me*. Second time around, all human Life is here. ***John Earls*** **8**

Alex G
HOUSE OF SUGAR
DOMINO

After the delectable country-tinged pop of 2017's *Rocket*, Alex G returns with a slightly more skewwhiff and experimental album. There are plenty of the Elliott Smith-esque acoustic-led moments that he's become so synonymous with – and many of those moments remain as seamless and beautiful as ever – but at times it veers into Bon Iver territory with heavily distorted and vocally manipulated tracks such as *Project 2*. It also straddles that line between DIY bedroom pop (where he began) and the more expansive big-budget production he now has access to, resulting in a record that is wonky at heart but sounds more fully realised and grown. The album is a pleasing amalgamation between a pre-existing familiarity of his work and a voyage into new territory. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **7**

Girl Band
THE TALKIES
ROUGH TRADE

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

After a health-related hiatus, the Dublin noise outfit return following 2015's debut. The band's proclivity for making thunderous teeth-loosening noise hasn't subsided, but here they also explore more texture and atmosphere, which results in a greater sense of cohesion. It's an overwhelmingly powerful listen at times, waves of bass submerging you, whilst the guitars sound like collapsing buildings and the vocals those of a tormented and anguished soul. Yet it's not all pulverising nihilistic noise, it's a playful, thoughtful and deeply intense record. In their absence, there's been a surge of acts formed in the band's shadow, whose vaguely post-punk but ultimately very safe music has resulted in great success, but none of them are taking the risks and exploring the exhilarating territory that Girl Band are. ***Daniel Dylan Wray*** **9**

Various Artists
STRAIN, CRACK AND BREAK: VOLUME ONE (FRANCE)
FINDERS KEEPERS

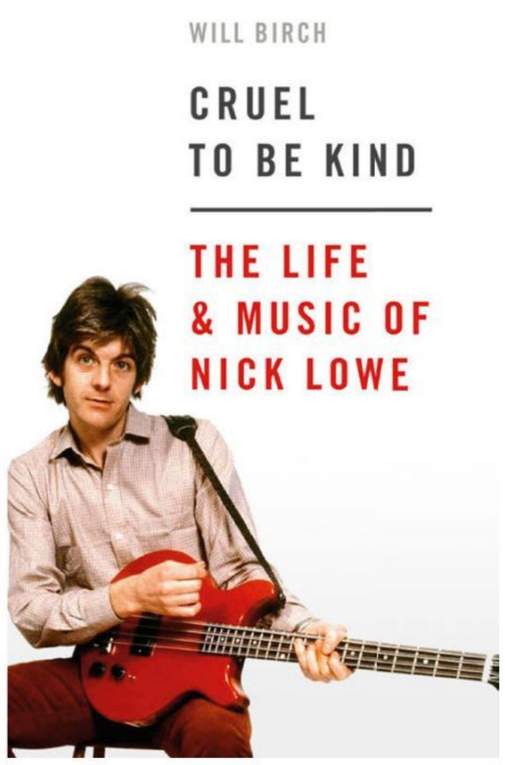
As the finest purveyors of psychedelic esoterica from all corners of the globe, only Finders Keepers can be custodians of the Nurse With Wound List. When Steven Stapleton's experimental trio released their debut album in 1979, they included an inventory of 291 influential bands from the real psychedelic underground that helped put their own avant-garde sonics into context. Records by those artists have become stratospherically expensive, which makes this partnership a serious cost-saving initiative. First up are artists from France. This means genre-obliterating free jazz, skronky prog, space-funk with clanging, Faust-ish overtones, ominous musique concrète, far-out noise and Horrific Child's towering highlife-horror gem, *Frayeur*. One for the heads. *Chris Parkin* **7**

Cruel To Be Kind

WILL BIRCH

CONSTABLE £20

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



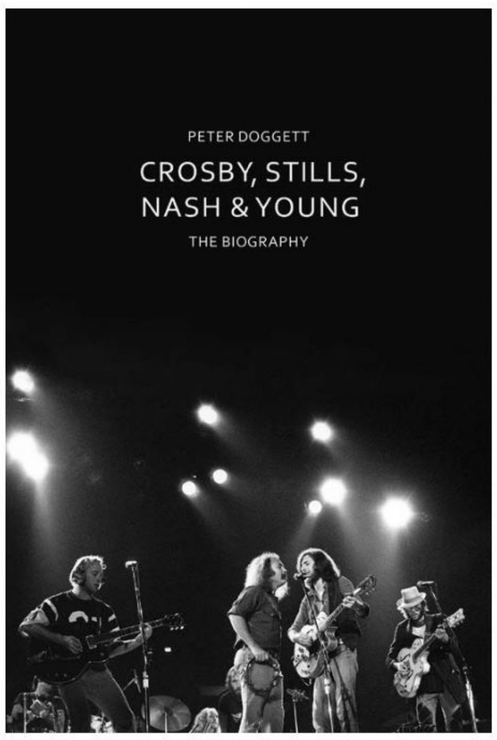
If anybody deserves to be the subject of a decent music biography then it's Nick Lowe, a national treasure whose long, strange and eventful career is ably chronicled here by Will Birch, latterly of pub rockers The Kursaal Flyers. Lowe had the occasional brush with mainstream success in the late 70s, with hits *I Love The Sound Of Breaking Glass* and *Cruel To Be Kind* denting the middle reaches of the charts. He also produced the first punk single (The Damned's *New Rose*), as well as Elvis Costello's first five albums, and married into the family of Johnny Cash (who recorded Lowe's *The Beast In Me*). All of which was trumped, financially at least, by the size of the royalty cheque he received after *What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love, And Understanding* featured on the 45m-selling soundtrack of *The Bodyguard*. And through it all Basher has been able to maintain a sense of perspective and humour – after all, this is the man who released an EP called *Bowi* in the immediate wake of Bowie releasing *Low*. ***Gary Tipp***

9

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

PETER DOGGETT

BODLEY HEAD £25



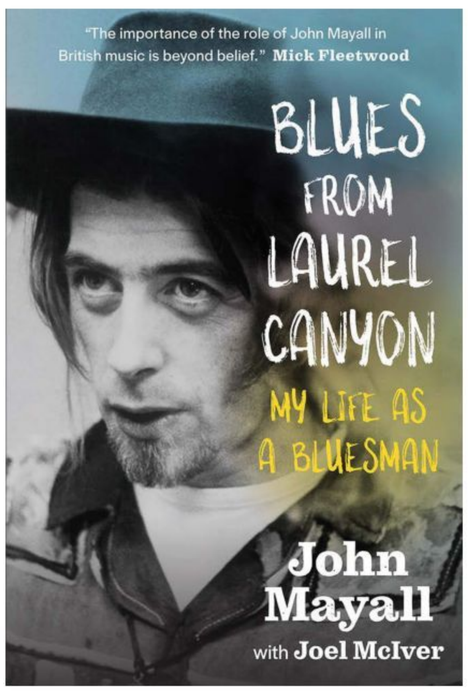
It was always a case of what might have been for Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. What might have been if four over-developed egos could have overcome problems with drugs, women, weapons charges, mania, drugs (again) and, most decisively, each other. For a start, they might have made more music together, with the quartet only managing three studio albums during the five decades after forming. For a band that dealt in harmonic perfection during a hopeful era with peace and love at the top of the agenda, CSN&Y were far from the poster boys people hoped they would be. Peter Doggett's new book skilfully excavates a rich seam of bad behaviour, with all four protagonists constantly called out, especially Young whose parallel solo career and weird wilfulness put a regular strain on proceedings. With their strongest album, *Déjà Vu*, dating back to 1970, this is a band with a long tail, and, to this end, Doggett wisely zones in on the glory days in the Canyon. *GT*

8

Blues From Laurel Canyon

JOHN MAYALL

OMNIBUS PRESS £20



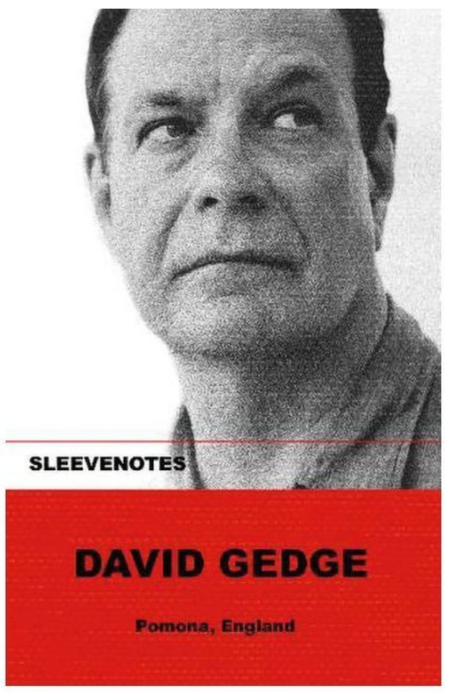
The godfather of British blues, Macclesfield-born John Mayall is one of this island's true musical trail-blazers, a man who started gigging when The Rolling Stones were still sitting in detention picking their noses. His band, The Bluesbreakers, helped to launch the careers of future members of Cream (Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce), The Stones (Mick Taylor) and Fleetwood Mac (Peter Green, John McVie and Mick Fleetwood). As the lanky drummer says in his intro: "The importance of the role of John Mayall in British music is beyond belief." And he just might be right. After the British Blues explosion burnt itself out, Mayall moved to LA and became part of the Laurel Canyon scene, taking his version of the blues back to the land of its birth. With such exalted company coupled with longevity, Mayall's anecdote-filled autobiography rattles along at great pace and offers an intriguing insight into the music scene in Britain before the rock revolution really took hold. There's even an entertaining chapter about Mayall's 18 months spent in Korea during his national service. *GT*

7

Sleevenotes

DAVID GEDGE

POMONA £8.00



In his recent autobiography, *Fried & Justified*, the reputed publicist Mick Houghton described The Wedding Present's David Gedge as 'an indie everyman with the gift for the vernacular and the love of the mundane'. And this latest volume from Pomona's consistently interesting *Sleevenotes* series does very little to contest that opinion, as the affable Gedge calmly goes about the business of analysing 15 of his often very personal songs (including three from interim band Cinerama) in a pleasingly thoughtful and no-frills manner. Running the gamut from 1985's *Go Out And Get 'Em Boy!* to *Rachel* from 2016's *Going, Going…*, Gedge shares songwriting insights and readily confesses to his failure in being able to judge the quality of his work (*Kennedy*: "This one's got B-side written all over it"). There are no keys to unlocking the mysteries of songwriting here, just a testimony to hard work, dedication and the decency of treating your fanbase as grown-ups. That and the virtues of naming your debut album after one of the greatest footballers to have ever played the game. ***GT***

7

DREAM MACHINES

Fyne Audio

F1-12 SPEAKERS

£26,000 fyneaudio.com

The veteran Scottish audiophiles go big with their new speakers. Start saving...

The rather grand, stately and impressive looking F1-12 is Fyne Audio's flagship design. This speaker represents the company's defining statement and it has piled all of its engineering prowess into this one project.

What you see on the front is a twin-cavity cabinet that contains a BassTrax LF diffuser. At its heart, the F1-12 boasts Fyne's largest IsoFlare driver to date. This pairs a 12" (300mm) multi-fibre cone LF unit with a 75mm titanium dome compression tweeter to create a point-source, time-aligned transducer delivering pure isotropic radiation across the entire audio spectrum.

The speaker is designed, hand crafted and hand finished at Fyne Audio's UK head office in real walnut veneer with burr walnut inlay.

1 HEAVY METAL
The cabinet is supported on a 20kg machined aluminium plinth.

2 FIBRE CLASS
The F1-12 sports a 12" (300mm) multi-fibre cone LF unit with a 75mm titanium dome compression tweeter.

3 FINE AUDIO
You can fine-tune the sonic qualities of the speaker to your listening room with these knobs.

1
2
3
FYNE
AUDIO
ENERGY
PRESENCE

The Ingenium shares the same design philosophy and features as AVID's more pricey designs

AVID HIFI INGENIUM P&P TURNTABLE

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

£1,250 avidhifi.com

High-end audiophilia at an extremely attractive price. What's not to like? asks **John Pickford**

AVID HiFi design and manufacture some of the finest audio equipment available anywhere. Their Acutus Reference turntable is a world-class vinyl spinner with a price tag that reflects its best-of-the-best status, yet puts it out of the reach of mere mortals such as I. The Ingenium P&P (Plug & Play) represents the entry into AVID's world of high-quality vinyl replay and while £1,250 is not exactly pocket money, it does buy you a turntable/tonearm/cartridge package that will show a clean pair of heels to almost any other in this price range.

Don't be misled by the Plug & Play status of the Ingenium. Although it doesn't require a painstaking set-up necessitating specialist alignment tools, it does have to be assembled – you can't simply pull it from the box, plug it in and start playing records. Fortunately, assembly is simple, with easy-to-follow instructions. Stanley knife in hand to open the box, I start my stopwatch and precisely fourteen minutes and thirty four seconds later, the stylus drops into the groove of my first selected record.

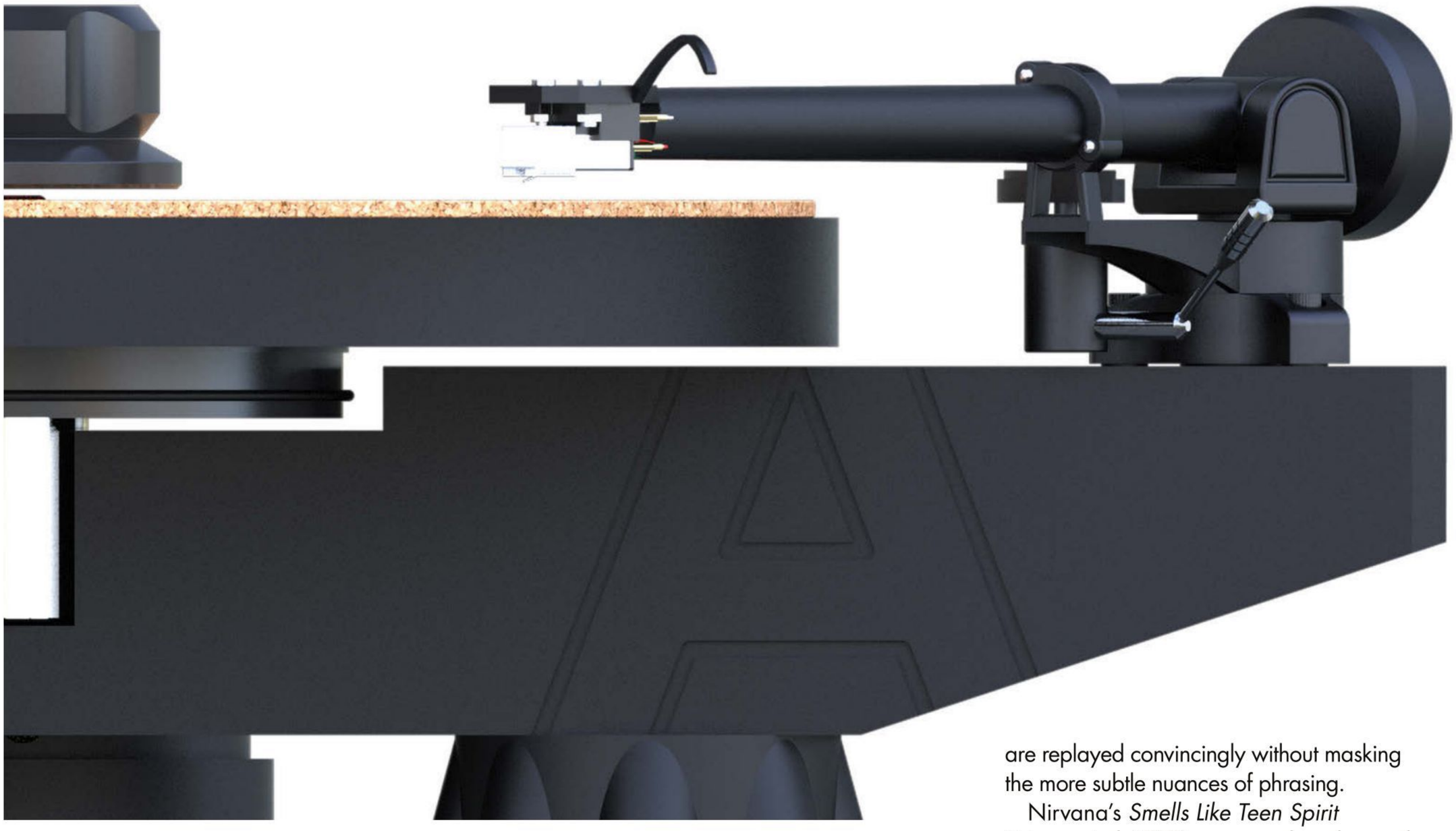
For anyone baulking at the idea of assembly, envisaging the nightmare of putting together flat-pack furniture, allow me to quote briefly from the instructions: "Using a twisting action, gently push the counterweight onto the rear of the tonearm until it reaches the stop and cannot be pushed further. The tracking weight is now correctly set." Simple.

THE INGENIUM OFFERS MORE THAN A GLIMPSE OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE COMPANY'S PRICIER MODELS

What you will find in the box is the chassis fitted with the tonearm and cartridge; tonearm counterweight; hub/bearing assembly; motor; platter; drive belt and bearing ball. You also get a weighty record clamp, which is usually the preserve of much costlier turntables.

The platter is relatively lightweight, however, as this needs to be removed to manually adjust the drive belt when switching from 33rpm to 45rpm, this is no bad thing. Some turntables feature glass platters, and while they are heavy and solid, I still have my reservations about the sonic properties of glass.

The tonearm and cartridge appear to be 'off the shelf' items, though if I've identified them correctly, they are quality products, which have no doubt been honed by AVID to achieve their ultimate potential. The arm in particular is a beautiful, tactile tool and while an arm lift is integral, those who prefer to cue by hand will enjoy the contours of the finger lift.



Only in the cabling does the Ingenium display its low-cost status. The output leads are generic yet perfectly functional, while the mains cable incorporates a chunky on/off switch that wouldn't be out of place on a table lamp.

With the power switch in hand, I set the deck spinning and listen. I'm met with near silence from the outboard motor, even with my ear pressed up close to the unit; however, with the switch still in hand I can feel its power by way of a low-level vibration. Lowering the stylus into the groove of my first disc test, I am encouraged by the initial sound. It's remarkable how the particular clunk of stylus interfacing with vinyl can indicate the tonal character of any turntable set-up.

Playing Cat Stevens' *Miles From Nowhere* (*Tea For The Tillerman,* 1970) immediately reveals the Ingenium has all the foundations of serious vinyl replay nailed. The double bass is both deep and detailed with no discernible overhang or one-note boom, while the acoustic guitar is richly textured with transient attack and body in perfect proportion. Vocals, too, are replayed convincingly without masking the more subtle nuances of phrasing.

Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* (*Nevermind,* 1991) can sound unpleasantly shouty on mediocre equipment, yet the Ingenium replays it with ample punch and drive to convey all the slam and visceral energy that weak-kneed players fail to deliver.

As an affordable route into AVID HiFi's brand of high-end vinyl replay, the Ingenium offers more than a glimpse of the performance of the company's pricier models. And while an upgrade of the cartridge somewhere down the line will improve the turntable's ultimate performance, it's clear the money spent on manufacture has gone to all the right places. The real ingenuity of the Ingenium is that the whole package is far greater than the sum of its parts; this is no-frills, high-end audiophilia at an extremely attractive price.

10

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
FLUID, WEIGHTY BASS	NOTHING AT THE PRICE
CLEAR, DETAILED TREBLE	
MUSICAL INSIGHT	
EASE OF SET-UP	
VALUE FOR MONEY	

The Valore offers a lively performance, but never fails to pick out essential detail

Gold Note VALORE 425 TURNTABLE

ACRYLIC/ITALIAN WALNUT £1,445 OR BLACK LACQUER £1,264 01420 544140

An Italian-designed mid-priced turntable, **Paul Rigby** inspects the sound and the quirks of this intriguing design

This belt-driven turntable from Maurizio Aterini's Italian hi-fi brand weighs in at a healthy 9kg and arrives in a selection of finishes. In fact, as I was writing this review, I learnt that Gold Note is also now planning to bring out a "975 silver foil" finish for the Valore 925, which will give the plinth additional shine.

So there are plenty of options in terms of how this turntable looks. My own review sample arrived in one of the special-edition finishes: the acrylic plinth version, all 23mm thick of it. What is notable about this version is the glass-like transparency of that plinth. This isn't your smoky, acrylic look. Oh no. The effect is quite remarkable and attractive. Definitely a talking point at parties.

The trouble, at least in ornamental terms, I had with the 425x170x360mm plinth is that all of it is transparent acrylic, so you can see where the feet have been screwed in to the plinth from below. Hence the scruffy screw threads are clearly visible inside. Nevertheless, the plinth remains attractive and you may not see this aspect as an issue. If I was buying a 425, I'd choose another finish that keeps the eye focused on the good points of this turntable instead of the fixings.

Those feet are a bit odd, too. Triangular, pointy, bent pieces of thin metal; they are there for isolation purposes, but I'd rather have vibration-soaking, absorption variants rather than the supplied rigid examples. Also, the supplied feet cannot be adjusted to cater for levelling. My moan to the company resulted in this welcome response: "At no extra cost, we also offer adjustable traditional large aluminium spikes."

Moving away from my grumbles, there's plenty of good stuff here, such as the electronically controlled, externally fitted twin-speed control box that comes with a fine tune adjustment. It takes AC from the mains and converts that to DC, then back to AC to

THE GOLD NOTE VALORE 425 CONTROLS MUSIC WITH IMPRESSIVE CONFIDENCE

power the motor. That might sound a little odd, but Gold Note says that this little trick reduces noise and improves sound quality.

Despite the fact that it doesn't match the plinth in aesthetic terms, the control box works well, and I like the fact that it is separate from the plinth to reduce veiling noise.

The excellent B-5 tonearm is Gold Note's own creation

The B-5 arm is Gold Note's own creation. Spanning 9", it is a tweaked version of the company's own B-5.1. The former reduces the tolerances a tad, but the B-5.1 can be yours for extra cash as an upgrade. A 4mm dust cover is included, too.

During my sound tests, I played prog from Camel and mixed that with jazz vocal from a sadly oft-forgotten artist, Ethel Ennis. Prog sounds offered focus and precision. Guitar strings were definite and considered events.

Drum hits were exact and accurate, while the bass offered bounce and the presentation as a whole sounded well structured and formed. The Ethel Ennis track provided a welcome sense of space with a notable trumpet attack sequence blending well with bass from the saxophones. The contrast in resonance was most effective. Ennis' vocal was also striking, being smooth but also clear in its presentation.

The Valore 425 controls music with impressive confidence. That is, all of the inherent frequencies behave themselves, there is no bass blooming or barking midrange here and no one frequency encroaches into another's territory causing masking and detail veiling. Alongside this useful facet is the turntable's dynamic reach, which provides space and air for subtle detail to come through, while instruments have a pleasantly characterful response.

Combine the company's boldness in its in-house aesthetic design with this excellent sound response and you've got yourself quite a turntable! **8**

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
INSTALLATION	PLINTH
SOUNDSTAGE	FEET
PRECISION	
DETAIL	

Mitchell & Johnson 800 SERIES

PRE/POWER AMPLIFIER

£2,598 (£1,299 PER UNIT) mitchellandjohnson.com

Designed, engineered and hand-built entirely in the UK, **John Pickford** assesses a tuneful and rhythmically engaging new amp series from Mitchell & Johnson

Founded in 2012, Mitchell & Johnson are relative newcomers to the world of hi-fi. Previous products have been low-cost designs, so the new 800 Series represents the company's first foray into serious sound reproduction. Designed and built in Britain, M&J believe the increased labour costs of domestic manufacture are worthwhile to ensure critical quality control.

The pre and power amplifier combination on test here are attractively styled with brushed aluminium casework in silver (black is also available) and each features a display window on the front panel. Similarly sized, the S815 power amp is, at 16kg, significantly heavier than the S800 preamplifier, due in no small part to the Noratel toroidal transformers and large heatsinks, which are semi-enclosed to avoid possible injury from both jagged edges and heat; the heat emanates from high-output Toshiba transistors operating in analogue class A/B mode.

Connectivity is extensive, with the S800 providing four analogue phono line inputs as well as a set of XLR inputs to accommodate units with balanced outputs. Digital sources are served by USB Asynchronous, 3x Optical and 3x Co-Axial, however I'm sure you'll be far more interested to learn that the phono input supports both Moving Magnet and Moving Coil designs. Outputs include two RCA phono, a balanced XLR, Tape Out and a Sub Out to supply a volume-controlled feed to an active subwoofer. There are also 12-volt power links to synchronise on/off between the two units. Four pairs of shrouded speaker terminals on the S815's rear panel allow for both bi-wiring and bi-amping, though neither is obligatory.

Connectivity is extensive, with the S800 providing four analogue phono line inputs

The appeal of the front panel displays is a matter of taste, the blue backlighting of the LCD display being a pet peeve of mine. The information displayed on the preamp is useful, however, and many users will appreciate being able to edit the input source names, for example. The 'VU' meters on the power amp may appeal in a retro-modern way, though presenting the power output in decibels is curious; power output is 150 watts RMS per channel into 8 ohms (4 ohms: 280 watts RMS per channel).

Following a brief 10-minute warm-up, I hook up my reference turntable to the phono input and select MC operation from the system menu. Initial impressions are disappointing, with music sounding flat, vague and lacking resolution. Perplexed at the underwhelming sound quality, I switch to the CD input and replay the same track; *Here Comes The Sun* from The Beatles' *Abbey Road*. Magically, the soundstage opens out and it seems as if a veil has been lifted from my loudspeakers, as I am presented with a clear and precise rendition of the song. Moving back to vinyl replay, the magic has vanished as I am again hearing a lifeless, two-dimensional sound. At this point, I decide to patch-in my Audio-Technica step-up transformer and switch the phono input to MM. Hey presto! Sound quality is restored. A quick revisit to the Moving Coil stage confirms its less than stellar performance, and subsequent auditioning is carried out via the Moving Magnet phono stage.

Settling down with *Abbey Road*, *Here Comes The Sun*'s acoustic guitar/Moog synth introduction is articulate, while the M&J combo highlights the rest of the song's inherently bright mix. Opting for something weightier, Radiohead's *Karma Police* from *OK Computer* (1997) has enough low-end heft, if not quite reaching the depths I am used to hearing. This leaner presentation has the positive effect of making the track sound less ponderous, while the complete sonic picture from top to bottom knits together seamlessly.

> FOR THOSE WHO FAVOUR THE BROADER MUSICAL PICTURE OVER A BOMBARDMENT OF FORENSIC DETAIL

Playing a broad selection of music, ranging from the classic jazz of Thelonious Monk's *Brilliant Corners* (1957) to this year's superb *Designer* by Aldous Harding, the M&J combo's nimble nature is revealed repeatedly. That said, the amplifier isn't particularly revealing of fine detail, instead presenting music in an enjoyable, cohesive manner without throwing a spotlight on low-level nuances.

Tuneful and rhythmically engaging, this amplification system makes the best of poorer, lo-fi recordings, never giving a warts-and-all presentation of music. This suggests it has been voiced to appeal to music lovers with eclectic tastes rather than the sort of audiophile who regards Steely Dan as the epitome of rock and roll.

Concerns about the performance of the MC phono stage aside, these Mitchell & Johnson 800 Series amplifiers are a fine choice for those who favour the broader musical picture over a bombardment of forensic detail.

8

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
MUSICALLY UNFUSSY SOUND	LACKS RESOLUTION AND FINE DETAIL
EXCELLENT RHYTHM AND TIMING	HAZY MC PERFORMANCE
COMPREHENSIVE CONNECTIVITY	
STYLISH REMOTE CONTROL	
SOLIDLY BUILT	

The rear of the S800 chassis is excellently featured, with two Pre outs plus a Tape out and Sub out. Balanced outputs are there, too

CLOSER

VINYL'S GREATEST FINAL TRACKS

#5 DR. JOHN
I WALK ON GUILDED SPLINTERS

Voodoo king Dr. John's swampy psychedelic classic ends with a funky flourish, as **Gary Tipp** explains

Mac Rebennack was born in New Orleans in 1941 and died there peacefully in June of this year aged 77. He lived his life steeped in the mysterious voodoo folklore of the Crescent City and will be forever linked with its rich musical roots. After encountering the legendary R&B pianist Professor Longhair when he was 14, Rebennack decided to pursue a career in music.

The Dr. John persona that he developed, funnily enough, was created in L.A, where Rebennack was carving out a living as a session musician, switching to the piano from guitar after losing the ring finger of his left hand to a gunshot wound. His intention was to create a character in the same vein as Marie Laveau, the voodoo queen of New Orleans, and he never thought the persona would stick as enduringly as it did. On his early records, the name on the label was 'Dr. John, The Night Tripper', while the credits billed him as 'Dr. John Creaux'. Quite quickly, the full 'Night Tripper' subtitle was dropped, and Rebennack resumed using his real name for writing credits.

During this time, he performed a lively, theatrical stage show inspired by Mardi Gras costumes, voodoo ceremonies and medicine shows, and was soon able to summon a devoted following. An early UK appearance saw him grace the bill at the Bath Festival of Blues and Progressive Music in Shepton Mallet in 1970, an event that proved to be the immediate precursor to Glastonbury.

Using spare time from a Sonny and Cher recording session, Dr. John released his first solo album in July 1968 on Atco, a sub-label of Atlantic Records. *Gris-Gris* is a remarkable, swampy brew of psychedelic voodoo funk. The album was so singular in its spooky, sonic vision that mainstream audiences were initially unsure of what to make of it, while label boss Ahmet Ertegun was considerably less on the fence, remarking: "How can we market this boogaloo crap? Why didn't you give me a record that we could sell?"

UNHOLY BREW

Over the years, the album has transcended Ertegun's kind words of encouragement, with the closing track, *I Walk On Guilded Splinters,* acknowledged as its enduring psychedelic masterpiece. A hypnotically foreboding eight-minute processional mantra, it is a reworking of a traditional voodoo church song, with lyrics dripping with the New Orleans dialect ('Je Suis Le Grand Zombie'). "It's supposed to be 'Splendors', but I turned it into 'Splinters'," explained the good Doctor helpfully. "I just thought splinters sounded better and I always pictured splinters when I sung it." To add to the general confusion, the word 'guilded' also appears as 'gilded' on subsequent pressings.

I Walk On Guilded Splinters has proven irresistible to any number of artists who have committed versions to vinyl. These include Cher, who released it as a single in 1969, Marsha Hunt, Humble Pie and Woking's very own voodoo sorcerer Paul Weller. ●

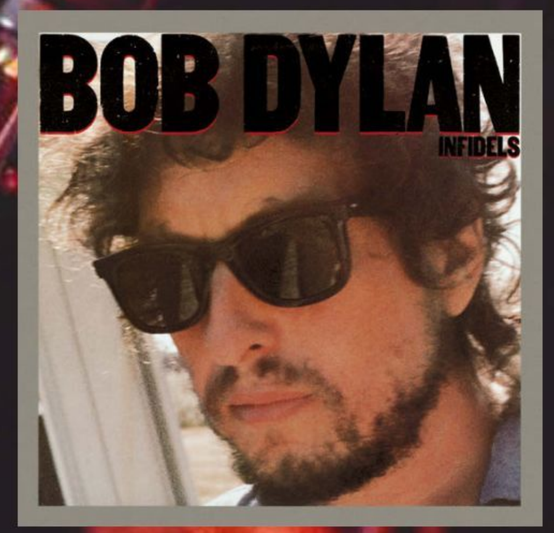
I Walk On Guilded Splinters has proven irresistible to any number of artists

CHARLIE STEINER/HIGHWAY 67/GETTY IMAGES

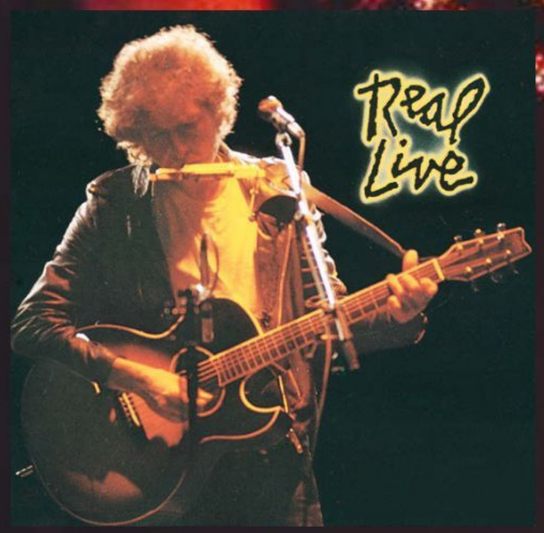
BOB DYLAN

Vinyl Reissues

06.09.2019



Infidels - 1LP



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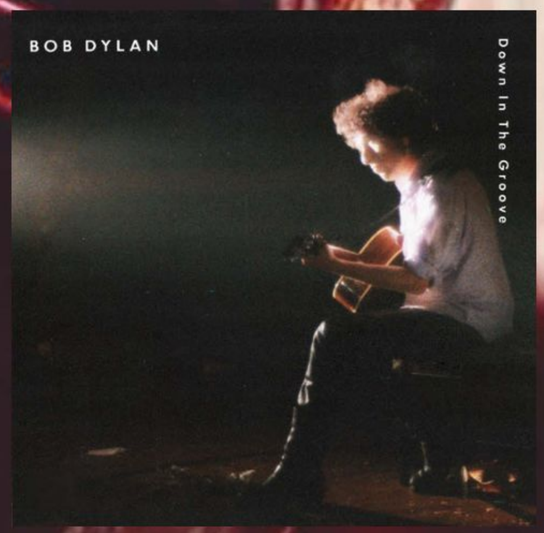
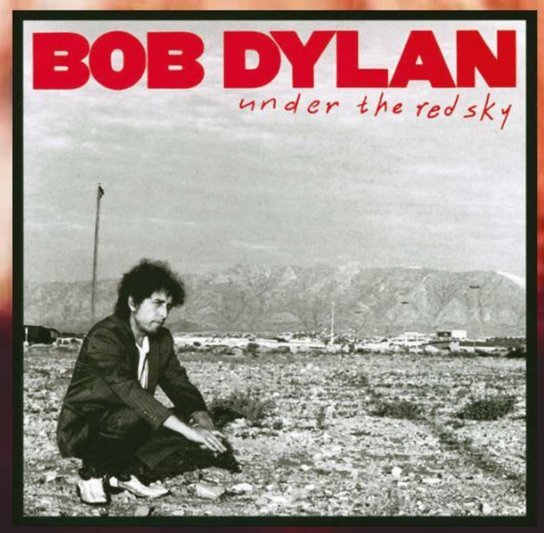


Down In The Groove - 1LP



Under The Red Sky - 1LP

LEGACY

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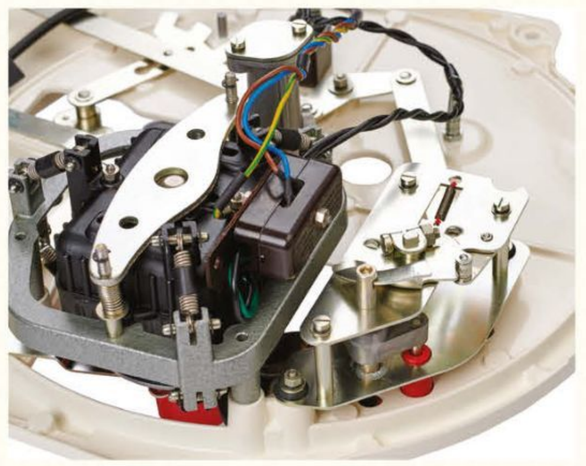

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